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THE PELICAN PAPERS





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THE PELICAN PAPERS.



THE PELICAN PAPERS:

REMINISCENCES AND REMAINS OF A

DWELLER IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY

JAMES ASHCROFT NOBLE.



HENRY S. KING & Co.,

65, CORNHILL, AND 12, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1873.

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TO

F. M. J.

I OFFER THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
KNOWING WELL THAT WHAT GOES WITH IT
WILL GLORIFY
EVEN SO POOR A GIFT.



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THE PELICAN PAPERS.

I.

PAUL PELICAN.

MY friend, Paul Pelican, has gone from me, and I am left alone. I am beginning, for the first time in my life, to realize the meaning and the horror of loneliness. We lived side by side, mind by mind, heart by heart, through years not many in number, but all crowded with pleasant meetings; and now we are separated by the distance between two worlds. In the absolutely true and awful sense of the word he can never be dead to me, for there is a friendship over which the thing we call Death has no power; and this friendship has been (shall I not say, it *is*?) ours. Still I am bereaved. Time and space are no gods, but they are powerful demons; and though they can never take *him* from me, they have taken the things next in preciousness—the sound of his merry laugh and the sight of his ever-welcome face. Them I can never recall from out of the silence and the darkness; but the witch of memory helps me to bring some phantasm of him back to earth, and the following pages are the result of her spells. I write them first for myself, but not less for

any who may be induced to read them, believing with our great modern philosopher that "all men are, to an unspeakable degree, brothers ; each man's life a strange emblem of every man's ; and that human portraits, faithfully drawn, are of all pictures the welcomest on human walls."

Paul Pelican was the name of my friend ; that is, the name by which these pages shall know him. What matters it whether this were the name by which he was known to his tailor and bootmaker, to the old man who weekly sold him his four ounces of fragrant smoking mixture? If he never had a characteristic appellation before, let me give him one now as a parting present ; let no meaningless Smith or Jones intrude upon ground dedicated to a true dweller in the wilderness. Such he was always ; for though, in a sense, it is true that the original man who dares to live his own life and think his own thoughts finds companionship everywhere, it is equally true, in another sense, that he finds it nowhere. I do not mean to call Pelican a genius ; he had few of the qualities which we associate with that great word. But he was distinguished from the multitude by a passionate eagerness to get at the central truth of things ; a contempt for all convenient compromises ; a spirit of wild rebellion against the coarse material facts and the "vested interests" that stood in the way of great ideas ; and, in spite of all these, a curiously intense and seemingly absurd reve-

rence for the men and things that he fancied he had tested and found worthy. A man whose beliefs and disbeliefs, enthusiasms and indifferences, were all "caviare to the general"; who could not be labelled, and of whom, therefore, little could be made in this classifying age; who refused to listen to the ten thousand shrieking voices which now lacerate the air, bidding every man choose his party and take his side. None of the party uniforms fitted him, so he refused them all; but, so far as I could see, gained little by his refusal but misapprehension and contempt. "There are people," said a writer in the *Saturday Review*, "whose appreciation of a truth seems to depend upon its capability of being neatly rounded off and closely packed in a convenient formula;" and there are also people whose appreciation of character is of the same order: they prefer intelligible vice to incomprehensible virtue; and, while they will tolerate anything they can understand, it is their misfortune to be able to understand nothing that is not cut down to one of the few approved patterns.

I cannot, however, speak for Pelican, but must leave him to speak for himself, as satisfactorily as may be, in the following pages. I shall have nothing to do but to relate those incidents in our friendship which throw any light upon those spoken and written words of his which seem to me more or less worthy of some permanent record. A few of the books which were his friends are now mine; a few of his pictures glorify my walls;

but I cannot help feeling that the black leather-covered box, crammed to the top with written expressions of himself,—the box which I have known so long, and which lies before me as I write,—is the most valuable because the most characteristic legacy he has left behind him. I am conscious how partial must be my estimate of these papers which seem the very essence of himself; and yet, as I read them again and again, I cannot help thinking that there may be some for whom these tracings of a vanished hand, and these utterances of a voice that is still, may not be wholly empty and vain.

The year 186— was drawing to a close when I first met with Paul Pelican. I had gone to reside in a small suburb of one of our great overgrown towns, a suburb which at that time was much more rural than urban; and in the course of a search for winter evening entertainment, I chanced to hit upon a little knot of men, young and old, who had formed themselves into a sort of literary society or club, which met weekly in the only available public building in the place—the schoolroom of a little dissenting chapel. I have seen and belonged to many associations professedly of the same order, but they have all seemed wearisome and vexatious when compared with that little coterie at Brookfield. It did not boast of many men of high powers, but there was a certain freshness about the atmosphere which was wonderfully stimulating. From the High Church dissenting

minister, who wrote an eloquent essay on the necessity for appealing to the senses in religious worship, down to the thriving young iron-founder, who held all sorts of revolutionary heresies concerning the rights of property, and the parish schoolmaster, who had a crazy aversion to poetry, fiction, and all imaginative literature, there was scarcely one of its members who was not in some way noteworthy. In many cases, of course, this noteworthiness consisted only in some exceptional development of stupidity. But at Brookfield even stupidity was made amusing ; and if any meeting passed without the utterance of any profound thought, we were never left without the memory of more than one wholesome laugh.

I have not forgotten, nor am I likely to forget, my first evening among the little community which considered itself—perhaps not without some show of reason—the representative of the culture of the neighbourhood. There was a hot discussion on one of those well-worn subjects which seem to have been by universal consent handed over to such societies to be property of them and their heirs for ever ; but the triteness of the theme, so far from daunting the orators, seemed to incite them to make the most of it and of themselves. It was a characteristic occasion, and as I listened I felt I could not have chosen a better evening for a visit. The debate was opened by the oratorical member who, in the approved fashion, quoted a great deal of poetry, and worked himself up to a wonderful pitch of excitement in

impassioned climaxes, informing us in thrilling accents that he paused for a reply. He was followed by the practical and sensible member, who sneered ferociously at the poetry, pulled the climaxes to pieces, and in many ways intimated that the pause of which we had heard need not be of long duration. Then we had the inevitable silly member who—as the manner of such men is—ingeniously misunderstood everything that had been said, and laboriously answered all the arguments that had *not* been advanced. The philosophical member then announced his intention of taking us back to first principles; but he, unfortunately, met with a metaphysical fog on the way, and was soon lost to sight. This was the description of his performance given by the speaker who succeeded him, a young man who looked about twenty-two years of age, and who had been sitting near me, apparently concentrating all his attention on some caricature with which he was illustrating a page in his note-book. He was tall and very slender, with a thin face, thoughtful and observant, not without certain indications of humour (active or passive, I could not tell which) lurking about the lines of his mouth. His straight light hair was worn somewhat longer than was usual, but there was nothing very striking in his appearance except his look of extreme delicacy, which perhaps heightened the effect of the one noticeable feature in his face, a pair of large dark-gray eyes, of great beauty, having a curious sympathetic expression,

which I do not think I noticed until some time afterwards. Indeed I am sure I did not, for I remember I was first struck by his voice, the tones of which affected me in a manner I have never been able fully to account for. He had not been speaking for more than two minutes when all at once there darted into my mind the conviction that here was one of whom I could make a friend, and with whom I should before very long enter into intimate personal relations. I am not a fanciful person, and I never had such a presentiment before or since; but I think the explanation may be found in the fact that there are persons whose voices are in every tone the full expression of their nature, and therefore the moment they speak you *feel* what they are though you cannot *know* it.

The speech was not remarkable, though I remember I thought it interesting; for it gave one the impression of an enthusiastic fearless nature, fond of the sledge-hammer style of hitting; having no respect of persons; hating intolerance, yet not without a quaint and humorous intolerance of its own—laughable rather than grievous to most sensible people; full of mental vitality; impatient of many things, especially of superficial or conventional speech; yet with hearty beliefs and the reverence which necessarily comes of such, and more than counteracts surface scepticisms and rebellions. When the speaker sat down I asked the friend by whom I had been taken to the meeting who he was, and in his

whispered reply I heard for the first time the name of Paul Pelican.

The meeting was soon over, and being introduced to each other we soon discovered that we were neighbours. We walked from the schoolroom together, and were in the middle of an animated talk when we reached the garden gate of my domicile. We both seemed inclined to prolong the chat, and Pelican was easily persuaded to come in and take a share of my bread and cheese and beer. These luxuries being despatched, we drew our chairs round to the fire, and lighted fragrant fires of our own, Pelican having—as a sort of preliminary exercise—begged leave to inspect my two or three book-shelves.

“I always like looking at a library,” said he with amusing frankness, “partly because it is a pleasant sight in itself, and partly because it is such a capital indication of character. Judging a man by his friends seems to me absurd, for our friends are often thrown at us by circumstances, so all we can do is to make the best of them—and a very poor best it often is. But a man chooses his own books, and if anything about him is characteristic his library ought to be so.”

This sounded alarming, but it was no use exclaiming against the application of the test. The examination began, and Pelican fired off a regular fusilade of comments as his eyes travelled over the titles.

“‘The Soul,’ by Francis William Newman; ‘The Eclipse of Faith;’ rather curious to see them both on

the same shelf: 'the bane and the antidote' as the good chapel people would say, and I should agree with them. Our only difference would be as to which was which."

I explained that the latter work did not belong to me, but was the property of one of the deacons of the little tabernacle.

"I thought as much," he said, "for the other books did not seem to harmonise with it. It is an amusing work, and in one way quite unique. Most controversialists—even religious ones—have *some* scruples; some sense of literary decency; they are afraid of misrepresenting and misquoting their opponents in *too* barefaced a manner; but the author of the 'Eclipse' is above all that;—he sticks at nothing. He will even make game of his own Bible if it will help him to poke fun at poor Mr. Newman. If by some strange accident the book should ever go down to a remote posterity, it will be exhibited under a glass case in the New Zealand museum of the future, and labelled—SPECIMEN OF THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY: 19TH CENTURY; TIME OF VICTORIA I. *This work is generally supposed to be an attack on all religion, and internal evidence seems to favour the theory, as its triumphant hero is a blaspheming infidel; but our most eminent literary historian has discovered it to be a defence of Biblical Christianity, written by an orthodox professor at a theological seminary. This is believed to be the only copy of the first edition now in existence, but the work has lately been reprinted and widely*

circulated by the Society for Promoting Universal Scepticism. . . . Ha! here are 'St. Augustine's Confessions' I have never seen them, and shall be glad if you will lend me the book some day if I don't buy it for myself. I am making a collection of autobiographies; and you have no idea how much clearer a view into human nature you can get from them than from books of any other kind. Ordinary biographies, novels, and dramas, however good they may be, are sketches of men and women from the outside; but autobiographical writing of any kind takes you into the inner chamber. Even if the writer is consciously false, he betrays himself unconsciously; and so, if you lose the real man at one point, you catch him at another. . . . So you have actually a copy of George MacDonald's 'Phantastes'; I have never seen it on any bookshelf but my own, and I can't imagine how it is that so few people know anything about it. It seems to me to be quite unequalled in its way—a work of art almost without a flaw. It has imaginative beauty enough for a score of poems, and more spiritual insight than I generally find in a hundred sermons. Perhaps, however, these are the causes of its unpopularity. Tupper and Spurgeon are popular enough, and these are not exactly the prominent characteristics of *their* works. . . . Speaking of Tupper reminds me of an article in the *North British Review* in which the 'Recreations of a Country Parson' were likened to the 'Proverbial Philo-

sophy.' I see you have got them here. The article was on the whole capital, but I am sure the writer was unfair to A. K. H. B. Tupper is dull, but the Recreations are among the pleasantest and most charming papers that have seen the light this century; and I shouldn't hesitate to prophesy that two or three of the essays, especially the one on the 'Art of Putting Things' will live longer than many things which seem now to have a much better chance. They have that graceful urbanity which is the finest characteristic of the typical man of the world, and in addition to that they have the gentleness and tenderness in which men of the world are generally deficient. . . . I see you have here the 'Bon Gaultier Ballads.' They are very brilliant and amusing, but somehow I always feel ashamed of laughing at them. I can't help enjoying clever parodies *with my mind*, but I hate them *with my heart*. They violate one's reverential instincts; and make one feel that however good, or beautiful, or divine things may seem, the trail of some slimy serpent is over them all. The hero of 'Locksley Hall' was silly enough to provoke any amount of laughter when he talked about marrying a black woman because he had been jilted by a white one; but there are verses in the poem—many of them—which might have saved it from the profanation of an absurd parody. I never want to read Bon Gaultier again."

And so, for nearly half an hour, his critical gossip continued, until, having run over my little library, he

seated himself by the fire, and for a time the conversation became more general and less literary. He told me the story of the formation of the society where we had met; talked about the chapel, and gave a most laughable description of its leading spirits,—the pillars of the temple, as he called them; then gave me some account of his wanderings in search of health, but at last returned, with evident gusto, to the books which were apparently almost the sole companions of his solitude. He quoted passages from his favourites, both prose and poetry, one after another, until I was astounded at his marvellous memory, and somewhat amused at a development of enthusiasm which was then new and strange to me. But I soon began to understand him, and to see how much more *real* literature and art were to him than to most of the people with whom I had previously come into contact. A noble thought or a beautiful image was never felt by him to be a mere thought or image—a dead thing lying outside of himself, to be calmly analysed and estimated. It was, as it were, alive and human; and the only thing he could do with it was to take it to his heart, make it one with himself, and then cry to any whom he thought would listen, “Will you not love it too?”

Pelican did not leave me that evening until nearly midnight, asking, as he went away, if he might come again. Of course an invitation was given. Before very long I began to expect him pretty frequently; and

whenever he was prevented from coming to my rooms, we always met at the weekly gathering of the little literary society. It was Pelican's hobby. He had devoted all his energies to its establishment, and he was firmly convinced that he could not over estimate the benefits he had received from two or three of the higher and wider and more stimulating spirits who belonged to it at that period of its existence. In this I think he was right; for he was one of those happily constituted natures who can absorb anything of value which another has to give without any unmanly sacrifice of individuality. I am inclined to think that this faculty is so rare as to confer a note of distinction upon any man possessing it. Many men are what Mr. Carlyle calls "valet souls," totally incapable of appreciating or reverencing anything above them; and too often those who are not valets are hero-worshippers of the ignoble sort, who, having selected their masters, sell themselves into a contemptible slavery. But there are a few, whom this classification does not cover, and the name of one of these select souls was Paul Pelican. With great capacities for reverential feeling, and what I may call a constantly upturned eye, he was always a worshipper—a slave never. He had pre-eminently what he himself called the great religious and social want, of our age, a Catholic soul and a Protestant mind. In a letter written during one of his frequent absences from home, I find certain sentences of self-criticism, which are,

perhaps, worth quoting here for more reasons than one.

“I have just finished Carlyle’s ‘Life of Sterling.’ It is an intensely interesting book, and its interest is of the highest or human order. With John Sterling I should have had strong sympathies, for I trace a likeness between so many of his spiritual features and my own. Carlyle says of him in one place: ‘It struck me further that Sterling’s was not intrinsically, nor ever had been in the highest or chief degree, a devotional mind. Of course all excellence in man and worship as the supreme excellence, was part of the inheritance of this gifted man; but if called to define him, I should say artist, not saint, was the real bent of his being. He had endless admiration, but intrinsically rather a deficiency of reverence in comparison. Fear, with its corollaries, on the religious side he appears to have none, nor ever to have had any.’ This strikes me as being an exceedingly fine analysis. There is an essential difference between the admiring reverence of the artist and the awed veneration of the saint. That remark too about fear is singularly accurate. A man who has what the phrenologist would call a large organ of veneration, is sure to be overwhelmed with awe and terror when the presence of great spiritual realities is first forced upon him. Hence, we always find in the biographies of men of conspicuous religiousness of nature records of spiritual terrors and agonies, which are apt to

seem, to men of different organizations, exaggerated and incomprehensible. Take, for example, the cases of Luther and Bunyan, especially the latter. I am convinced that even were I to adopt Bunyan's severe Calvinism as my creed, his spiritual experiences could never be mine. There is a reverence which naturally arises from the perception of another's superiority in goodness, power, or knowledge, which is possible to every man not under the control of extravagant self-esteem; but this reverence has nothing of terror in it, and is altogether different from the veneration of the typical religious man. When I realise most distinctly the presence of God, I feel love, gratitude, intense joy and exaltation, sometimes deep abasement; but never anything approaching to fear." In this letter Pelican, I think, hardly does himself justice, just as Mr. Carlyle very probably hardly does justice to Sterling. It is true that he was without fear on the religious side, but only because awe seemed swallowed up in trust; and he had certainly none of that preference for the contemplation of objects below his own level, which is the constant characteristic of men who are destitute of the reverential instincts.

In this matter of reverence, however, I soon discovered that Pelican had a bad reputation among his acquaintances, and it was easy to see how he had acquired it. He persistently refused to do homage to the pontiffs of Brookfield; and in the face of that refusal it was hard

to believe that he did homage anywhere. He had a burning hatred of that pretentious commonplace to which the name of Philistinism has been so happily applied; and for local Goliaths, however many their cubits, he had *no* respect; for them he had nothing but words of defiant sarcasm and pebbles from the brook. He scarified the pompous magnates of the place to the best of his ability; and I am bound to admit that the exhibition was often amusing. But one or two of Pelican's friends, anxious that he should not become altogether a Pariah, remonstrated strongly against his constant use of his favourite weapons. He was, however, incorrigible. "You accuse me of sarcasm," wrote he, in answer to one of these friends, "and you are one of those who think that a sarcastic man must necessarily be disagreeable. Now this is untrue; for pure sarcasm almost always implies reverence," (Pelican is characteristically paradoxical here), "and the man who has reverence in him is never wholly either disagreeable or unlovable. Your allusion to Goethe's Mephistopheles is based on a misconception; for though the loose popular idea of that character is that of a sarcastic personage, Mephistopheles is just the sort of being who could never have been truly sarcastic. He could scoff and sneer, and scoffs and sneers are supposed by some foolish persons to be synonymous with sarcasms. They are really entirely different, inasmuch as they are expressions of hatred and contempt which, when pure and

simple, are the attributes of a devil ; while sarcasm is often the natural utterance of a divine disdain felt for hypocritical devoutness and pretentious folly from the lips of one who knows the meaning and loves the beauty of quiet holiness and modest wisdom. I dare not say that I am such a one ; but I think you will believe that from the bottom of my heart it is my longing so to be. Of all characters that of a scoffing, sneering Mephistopheles is the most horrible to me ; for a scoff is a sneer against the divine, and a sneer is a scoff against the human, uttered by a man who is devoid of reverence for the one and of sympathy with the other." This may or may not be expressed with perfect accuracy of language, but I think it is, in the main, true ; and it was Pelican's sole answer to all the friendly critics who wished to set him right with the outside world.

With that world he had many more sympathies than were at all apparent. The isolation into which the free action of his nature forced him was never welcome, and was at times unspeakably painful. He saw that he was shunned by those whom he was ready, nay eager, to love, if they would only let him ; and sometimes I could see that his wildest bursts were but inarticulate expressions of his horror of loneliness. As years passed on, I think he came to see that the fact that each man must live his own life, to some extent unknown, uncomprehended, misjudged, is not altogether without its redeeming side ; and among his papers I find a sonnet,

with which this chapter shall close, indicating, with sufficient clearness, the condition of feeling which he finally attained :—

“ Thy tears are vain, dear friend ; thou canst not yet,
With all thy toil, set to articulate words
Thy nature’s music ; canst not make its chords
To any listener audible. Eyes wet
As thine with this same sorrow oft have met
Mine, with sad yearnings for an answering glance
Of insight ;—then a wild look, cast askance,
At the deep gulph that is between us set.
The gulph remains : ’tis best it should remain ;
That while this foul clay-clothing wraps us round,
Our brethren’s eyes should ever more be dim
As they gaze on us ; but when free from stain
We rise, and in Christ’s likeness pure are found,
We can reveal ourselves to them and Him.”

II.

A CHAPTER OF POETRY.

I HAD known Pelican for some time, and had become pretty well acquainted with the general bent of his nature, before I discovered that he was ever in the habit of writing verses, though one little characteristic of his induced me to think it probable that he sometimes—to use the language of our elegant ancestors—“courted the Muse.” He was very fond of reading aloud and reciting ; and I was very soon struck by the curious fact that any passage of marked picturesqueness or melody gave him not merely intellectual pleasure but vivid sensuous delight ; a delight which, though more refined, was almost as entirely physical as that which gleams from the face of the *gourmand* when his palate first catches the flavour of his favourite dish. Now I have noted that every person I have met in whom this exceptional sensitiveness to certain literary delicacies exists, has what is vaguely called a poetical nature, which, if it express itself at all in any literary form, is almost certain, sooner or later, to attempt such expression in verse. I had therefore an impression, which gradually grew into a certainty, that the black box from which he had often taken prose manuscripts for my perusal, contained treasures of another kind to which I

was yet a stranger ; but I was equally certain that some day I should have a real knowledge of these effusions, whose very existence was then only an unverified hypothesis.

Our acquaintance very quickly glided into an intimacy closer, I think, than either of us had previously entered into with any other living being. I found it a very pleasant experience ; wonderfully pleasant ; for there was between us just that union of sentiment which gives association all its charm, and that difference of opinion and temperament which preserves its freshness and vivacity. But though, as I have said, we often met, and I knew that he enjoyed the meetings, it never struck me that they possessed for him anything like the value they had for me ; and, therefore, it was with a feeling of charmed surprise, not altogether unmingled with pride at seeing my critical prophecy fulfilled, that one evening when I came home from my work I found on the table an envelope containing a little poem addressed to me, offering his friendship and asking for mine, in words which were extravagant enough as applied to the receiver, but were by no means exaggerated expressions of the impulsive cordiality which Pelican often manifested, or of that intensity of emotion which he more rarely exhibited, but which constituted one of his greatest charms to the few who knew and loved him. At the foot of the sheet two or three sentences were added in pencil. "I could not

help writing this. Write me anything you please in answer, but don't say anything about it when we meet. There are some things one can only *talk* about sometimes. *Think* about it as much as you like, for it is true. I am your friend; let me be yours."

Thus was our alliance fairly inaugurated by Pelican's verses, the pleasant flattery of which brought to me not only delight but a certain wholesome humiliation. I think it is always humbling to see a true friend's ideal of ourselves plainly set before us; for it seems so often belied by the lower reality which we know so well. And yet, after all, it is sometimes helpful to see a transfigured portrait of ourselves; for the likeness of us which our friends bear in their hearts when they love us most truly is not imaginary; it is only ideal; and we not only *can* make it real, but are *bound* so to make it by the most sacred of all obligations—the demand of affection.

According to Pelican's request I said not a word concerning the glimpse he had given me of that world, the existence of which I had suspected; but merely wrote a line or two of simple prose to tell him how glad his poem had made me, and how hearty was my response to his appeal. Nearly a month passed, and I was spending an evening with him, when he broke a somewhat long silence by asking me if I were not very much surprised to find out that he sometimes tried to write poetry. "Not one whit," I answered, and then I told

him of my anticipations, and the grounds on which they were based. "Ah ! that is curious," he said ; " I should not be surprised if your theory were sound. I have a sort of vague notion that if we really anticipate anything, whether good or evil, it is only fair that we should have it. I think the celebrated Irishman in the story got the right thing from the hand of Fate when his pig turned out so light. You remember what he said : 'The pig didn't weigh so much as I expected, *and I never thought it would.*' What had been good expectations were swallowed up by evil thoughts, and he was well served. The moral of which is, that you have a right to see what I have got here."

Whereupon he turned to the black box, and took from it a packet of papers, tied round with legal red tape, which he handed to me. "You need not look at them now," he said ; "you can take them home with you, and tell me what you think of them next time we meet. They are a strange lot. When you read some of them you will see how much I can trust you with." I did not stay long with him that night, for I was anxious to inspect my new treasures. I soon saw, what he meant by his last sentence. Many of the poems were so imperfect in expression, and some few so entirely unreserved in their nature, that I saw, in his exhibition of them to me, the greatest proof he could give of the perfection of his confidence where it was once bestowed. As a matter of course they were all interesting to me,

and it is possible that the few I quote here may have some interest even for others. The incident which is versified in the first of these poems is, I believe, related in "Napier's History of the Administration in Scinde;" but Pelican found it in one of the published addresses of Frederick Robertson, of Brighton, where it is no doubt given correctly.

THE RED THREAD OF HONOUR.

A MODERN BALLAD.

Among the hills of India
Dwelt warriors fierce and bold,
The sons of robber chieftains
Who, in the days of old,
Fought for their mountain freedom,
And, if by Fate laid low,
Fell ever crowned with honour—
Their faces to the foe.

Now 'twas an ancient custom
Among those hillsmen brave,
When thus they found their kinsman,
To dig for him no grave ;
But the torn, blood-stained garments
They stripped from off the dead,
And then his wrist they circled
With green or crimson thread.

Many the green-decked warriors,
But only for a few
Was kept that highest honour,
The thread of sanguine hue ;

For 'twas alone the bravest
Of those who nobly shed
Their lifeblood in the battle
Whose wrists were bound with red.

And when they thus had graced them
Who fell before the foe,
They hurled their lifeless bodies
Into the plain below.
The earth did ne'er imprison
Those hillsmen brave and free,
The sky alone should cover
The warriors of Trukkee.

There came a time of conflict,
And a great armed throng
Of England's bravest soldiers,
Avengers of the wrong,
Marched through the gloomy gorges,
Forded the mountain rills,
Vowing that they would vanquish
Those robbers of the hills.

The road was strange and dubious ;
Easy it was to stray ;
And of those English soldiers
Eleven lost their way.
Led by a trusty leader,
They reached a fearful glen,
And saw a mountain stronghold
Guarded by forty men.

Guarded by forty veterans
Of that fierce robber band,
In every face defiance,
Weapons in every hand.

"Back !" cried the trusty leader ;
The soldiers would not hear,
But up the foe-crowned mountain
Charged with their English cheer.


With loud huzzas they stormed it,
Nor thought to turn from death,
But for Old England's honour
Yielded their latest breath.
Short was the fight but deadly,
For, when our last man fell,
But sixteen of that forty
Were left the tale to tell.

But those sixteen were noble :
They loved a brave deed done ;
They knew a worthy foeman,
And treated him as one.
And when the English soldiers
Sought for their comrades slain,
They found their stiff, stark corpses
Prostrate upon the plain :
They lay with blood-stained faces,
Fixed eyes, and firm clenched fists,
But the RED THREAD OF HONOUR.
Was twined around their wrists.

I soon discovered that this ballad was a favourite with Pelican ; and it was one of the very few of his own effusions he could ever be prevailed upon to recite. He told me once that it always maintained its hold upon his imagination, and that he never came to the last verse without all his blood stirring within him. It was given

by an acquaintance of his at a public reading in the neighbourhood, and he was obviously very much pleased at the interest which it excited. "I don't pretend to wonder at it," said he. "The *poem* may be bad or it may be good; but I will maintain to the last that the *story* is grand. It is the finest example of non-Christian chivalry I ever heard of."

The following little study is one of the numberless records of natural phenomena and their accompanying moods which I found among Pelican's verses, and of which I dare say I shall be tempted to give other specimens in some chapter of these reminiscences. The hour of sunset had always a singular charm for him; indeed, he had a decided sunset mania, and after a hard day's work would often walk three or four miles to a little bit of rising ground where he could enjoy what he called his evening feast. Alexander Smith in one of those charming essays on which, I think, his fame will ultimately rest, asks, "Who remembers the sunsets of last year?" If Smith had known Pelican, this question would never have been put. *He* remembered them; and would sometimes say when looking at a picture, "This reminds me of a sunset I saw at such a place five summers ago." He had a curious system of classification, and spoke of sunsets religious, passionate, contemplative, demoniac, and so forth. The sunset of the poem seems to belong either to the religious or the contemplative species.



EVENING CALM.

The sun is sinking slowly in the west,
A broadening silver light is on the sea,
The calm which evening brings reigns in the breast,
And gentle voices seem to speak to me.

Those voices come, but why will they not stay?
Why has the bird of calm such wandering wings?
Why do these tranquil moments pass away
So quickly? They should not be transient things.

They should not go could I detain them here;
I would have evening always with its balm';
The noon-tide weariness, the nightly fear,
Should never mar the spirit's blissful calm.

And yet, perchance, if calm could thus be made
Eternal here it would be calm no more;
I might grow weary of the evening shade,
And of the sunset light upon the shore.

I might sigh longingly for starry night,
Or languish for the fresh life-giving morn,
Or even say, "Oh for the noon-day light,
Had I but it the heat might well be borne."

So it is best this soft, sweet light should go,
And day die gorgeously across the sea
In red and amber robes—a glorious show,
And that this calm should pass away from me.

And yet not wholly pass: the life once known
But for a moment lives in us for aye;
The joy we once have grasped and made our own
No years nor ages can take quite away.

The next poem I quote is of a very different order.

I call it a poem rather than two poems, because the connection of the sonnets is evidently not arbitrary but vital. I could not believe when I first read them, and I cannot believe now, that there was not some love-story behind them—a love-story which was not altogether a comedy but had certain tragic threads woven into the centre of its fabric. Whether there were really such a story, and if there were, what part Pelican had played in it, whether actor or spectator, were questions which often suggested themselves to me; but I never got from him even a hint that could give me a clue to an answer. Of course it is possible that I am altogether mistaken, and that they were only written as a semi-lyric, semi-dramatic exercise. But I doubt.

TWO SIDES OF A LOVE.

A DOUBT.

Dearest, a dreadful fear clouds my sad soul,
A fear that I have striven to put away
From me, and yet it grows from day to day.
Hourly I hear a bell that seems to toll
The knell of my great bliss. Over me roll
Dark waves of terror. O God, can it be
That I, who with sweet tears have praised Thee
For his deep love, have lured him to a shoal
And wrecked his life! I would not have thee waste
Thy days, O dear one; I would have thee taste
Life's cup of blessing; for thou knowest well
How little I can give thee; thou dost lose
By love that brings but sorrow, therefore choose
The fuller life, the joys that in it dwell.

AN ASSURANCE.

My love for thee, O loved one, is no waste
Of life. Nay, only in that love I find
My fullest, deepest life ; while far behind
Lie lifeless days which one by one did haste
Away from me unused ; days all defaced
By weakness and by folly, oft by sin ;
But when I met thee these dull days did win
A novel glory ; they were then first graced
By heavenly colouring ; their poisonous gray
Was changed to a rich crimson by a ray
Of God's light shining through thee. Unto Him
I offer praise for ever Who has given
Thee unto me, with thee a present heaven,
And a fair foresight of the seraphim.

As is almost always the case with young versifiers, there were to be found among these studies of Pelican's many echoes, conscious and unconscious, of the voices of those poets with which he was most familiar. When I brought the charge against him, he pleaded guilty at once, but in one of two cases the plea was accompanied by a ludicrously indignant protest against the putting in of the indictment. In a very dismal but highly alliterative lament put into the mouth of a young man who was tired of the world, most probably because the world was tired of him, there was rather a high-flown apostrophe to Death in which occurred these lines :—

“The lives of the race thou hast rounded
With the sweetness of visionless sleep,
As the isles of the ocean are bounded
By sea dark and deep.”

I told Pelican that if ever his melancholy effusion attained to the honours of type, people would be sure to say that he had in these lines stolen from Shakspeare. "Very likely," said he calmly. "Does not my old hero, Carlyle, say that the population of England is eighteen millions of people—mostly fools. I have abandoned my Carlyle fanaticism, but every now and then a horrible conviction comes that when he said *that* he was right for once." "That is possible," I said; "I hope hardly probable. But even supposing it to be certain, what has it to do with this special matter?" "Why, it has just this to do with it," said Pelican with lofty scorn of his imaginary critics, "that no one who was not sunk in hopeless folly would talk of stealing from Shakspeare. You can't do it any more than you can steal the air or the light. That figure of our little lives being rounded with a sleep is mine just because it is Shakspeare's, for Shakspeare belongs to us all. Whenever he expresses a thought his expression becomes a part of the thought; and if we take the thought, we must perforce take it in Shakspeare's clothing, for no other will fit. The thoughts are surely ours; and if we can only take them in the form which he has given them, *that* is ours; and *he* is ours; and not only he, but every other man who has given to world-wide ideas their final palpable embodiment. The sayings of all supremely wise men are common property, like God's picture gallery over yonder"—here he pointed through the window to one of his pas-

sionate sunsets,—“which is thrown open to every one free of charge. You can only steal from the half-wise men, and it is no use to do that, for you can very easily be half-wise yourself. The Duke of Devonshire allows me at fit times to ramble over the grounds at Chatsworth as if they were my own, and says not a word of trespassing; it is only Brown next door who has a padlock on the gate of his dozen yards of weedy garden ground.” I ventured to laugh here, and Pelican smiled grimly. “You may laugh if you like,” said he, “but I am right, depend upon it. There is as much nonsense written now-a-days upon this subject of plagiarism as there is upon every other subject, and I can’t say more than *that*.”

Pelican’s passing allusion to his defection from Carlyle reminds me of one of the first poems which met my eye when I examined the little bundle of manuscripts. It is rather interesting as a sketch of one of his “phases of faith,” and also as an attempt to hit what has been felt by many besides himself to be an open joint in the armour of the well accoutred Chelsea philosopher. I did not intend to quote it, but it lies before me now, and seems to ask for some recognition at my hands. In the original MS. it appeared without a title, and I asked Pelican what he intended to call it. “You may give it what name you like,” said he; “one is almost as good as another. If you can’t think of a dignified title, you may give it one of a more light and flippant character. Call

it this :”—and he gave me a title which I adopt here because it is, in its way, as characteristic as the poem itself. The reader must judge both.

“TO CARLYLE, AND BACK AGAIN.”

When ill at ease a creed I sought,
Dissatisfied with all yet taught,
Because in each I seemed to find
A hint of something more behind
The veil, which might if seen by me
Bring clearness out of mystery ;—
When in the dark I sought for one
Support to rest my soul upon,
Some Being before whom to fall,
And cry “Thou art the Lord of all,
Therefore my Lord !”—and seeking long,
And calling out in anguish strong,
Because the search seemed wholly vain,
And I found nought but weary pain—
A voice came suddenly to me
Which seemed to end my misery.

The voice said to me, “Doth thy soul
Wander through heaven seeking a pole,
A guiding star ; and dost thou roam
Through the wide earth to find a home
Of God—some consecrated fane
Where in rapt worship all thy pain
And unrest may forgotten be
As if they ne’er had haunted thee
If this thou seekest now thy search
May have an end, though neither Church
Nor priest can lead thy steps aright,
For they too wander in the night.

Thou hast a head and thou hast hands,
And the quick life in thee demands
That thou life's labour should'st not shirk,
But find (nor leave when found) thy work :
This done, learn thou from day to day
That thus to labour is to pray !”

“O voice,” I cried with spirit free,
“A secret thou hast taught to me :
Problems that did my spirit foil
Solutions find in daily toil.
If work be worship, this indeed
Is ampler truth than any creed !”

My joy was great ; but soon again
Dull mists of doubt o'erspread my brain.
Work may be worship—but of whom ?
In the wide universe is room
For many gods and lords ; and how
May I know Him to whom I bow ?
How learn whether He be indeed
The Being whom my soul doth need ?
The voice has told me what is true,
But surely this of old I knew ;
And something more my spirit needs
Than unknown masters—broken reeds.
I cannot tell to whom I pray
Working in darkness day by day :
I worship as I delve the mine,
I worship as I rear the vine,
I worship as I turn the sod,
Perhaps a fiend—perhaps a God.
“O God,” I cried, “I know Thou art,
Or else my sore distracted heart
Had ne'er been drawn mysteriously
Into the dark to search for Thee ;

And, knowing that Thou art, I know
I must find Thee, or else find woe :
I weary of my toilsome quest,
Solve THOU my doubts and give me rest."

Then suddenly, as if from deep
And thickly-peopled dreamy sleep
I had awaked, my awful doubt
Was like a night-mare put to rout
In one sweet moment ; and I saw
With undimmed eye the one sure law
Through which alone can peace be won
By those who toil beneath the sun.

Find work ; but find thy Master first,
Or all thy toil may be accursed ;
If thou would'st free thyself from doubt
Find God within, and work without,
That shall be worthy worship will
Be thine, and calm thy spirit fill.
Seek Him, nor think He hideth far
In some slow circling distant star ;
From thine own self set thyself free,
And thou shalt find He seeketh thee.
He seeketh thee from morn till eve,
Although thou dost His goodness grieve ;
He seeketh thee to show thee all
The work on this terrestrial ball
Thou hast to do : nor that alone,
For when His service thou hast done,
He finds thee rest beneath the tree
That grows beside the crystal sea.

"I have read that poem about work and worship to two people," said Pelican, "and I asked them what they thought about it. One of them reflected deeply for

a minute and a half, and then said it was '*very long*,' which was so discouraging that I hastened to change the subject. I discovered afterwards that he had in his pocket a poem of his own on the subject of the pre-adamite world, covering four pages of foolscap, which he had intended to read to me; but I had quite unwittingly left him no time. This was a twofold misfortune: I lost an intellectual treat, and secured an unpleasantly depreciatory criticism. The other said he was always afraid of that vague religiousness which, he regretted to say, had such a fascination for many young men. He wished my ideas had been clearer, and my poem more definite, concerning the great truths, etc., etc.,—you can imagine the rest. God Himself is always too indefinite for some people; they want a fetish,—an infallible old man, or an infallible book, or a wire-drawn creed, pretty highly spiced with mysterious Eastern metaphors and very intelligible damnatory clauses. The Jews were not the only people who lusted after a sign; the evil and adulterous generation has not died out yet. But still the signs don't satisfy them; for it is a grand thing that God evermore makes people unsatisfied until they find satisfaction in Himself."

To the opinion thus expressed Pelican always adhered with wonderful tenacity; but the vividness with which he realized the Incarnation as an eternal unveiling of God to him and to all men, saved him from anything like the mere "vague religiousness" which his good

critic so much dreaded. Every man's religious system has so much of his own individuality infused into it, and therefore contains so many apparent inconsistencies, that it is always difficult, and generally delusive, to attempt to sum it up in any single proposition or formula; but I do not think I am far wrong when I say, that the whole of Pelican's dogmatic faith might be expressed in the words he was never tired of quoting:—"The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." "This," he used to say, "is what most people profess to believe; what to me is a certainty; and yet I am called a heretic, not because my faith stops short too soon, but because it never stops short at all; and refuses with scorn to hear of a corner in the universe where the manifestation will be for ever powerless."

When Pelican got into this vein it was always impossible to bring him back to the subject from which he had digressed; so we were not able to have much talk about his poems or about poetry in general. A few thoughts of his on poetical matters, in which he always felt intense interest, will, however, be found scattered up and down the following chapters.

III.

LITERARY ARCHERY.

IN our literary society, as in most similar associations, there were certain silent members, some of whom, as a matter of course, had gained the reputation enjoyed by the dumb parrot, of thinking the more. We were not a large company, and the thought that so much intellectual force was lying unutilised was unendurable. But what could we do? We could not bring the rack and the thumbscrew into requisition: for, in spite of their often proved efficacy, these pleasant machines for compelling speech had gone finally out of fashion, and all the gentler and more modern means had been resorted to in vain. At last, one of our number whose mind was fertile in expedients, suggested the happy, though not very novel, idea of a manuscript magazine to be circulated among the members of the society; the projector expressing his firm conviction that the Brethren of the Guild of Golden Silence, as Pelican called our reticent friends, would enthusiastically avail themselves of an opportunity of delivering their souls, when such deliverance did not involve the ordeal of getting on their legs, stumbling over a few incoherent sentences, and finally breaking down utterly, in full view of an audience which was not always perfectly sympathetic. A special

meeting of the society was called to organize the new venture ; and to give all possible dignity to the undertaking, it was held at the house of the president, and prefaced by an elaborate supper. We were rather disappointed that none of the silences would take the conduct of the magazine ; but as several of them promised to become contributors, we had to be content. The next thing to be settled was a name for our new organ, and on this matter no one was silent ; but every one had a different suggestion to make. "The Thinker," "The Brookfield Literary Magazine," "The Bowie-knife," "The Casket," "The Experiment," "Odds and Ends," "Inspirations and Imbecilities ;"—these were among the many titles that were proposed either in earnest or in jest. Some were at once rejected with disdain, others were thought too imposing or too commonplace, and none were generally considered satisfactory. During the discussion, Pelican had been busily drawing upon a piece of cardboard ; and when we seemed in the condition of greatest bewilderment, he handed to the chairman the result of his labours as a suggestion for a title and a design for the cover. At the top, in the centre was a representation, of the usual round canvas mark used at archery meetings, while above it and on each side of it were flying arrows, some going right, and some—I fear the greater number—hopelessly wrong. Below, in ornamented letters composed of bows and quivers, was inscribed—

THE TARGET :

HITS AND MISSES BY MEMBERS OF THE BROOKFIELD
LITERARY SOCIETY.

The idea being considered a good one, was unanimously adopted, and the business of the evening went on without further check. I, as the most silent member that could be laid hold of, was appointed one of the editors, and Pelican was induced to be the other. At first we seemed to have been elected to a very bed of roses. There was really nothing to be done; for a dozen members were ready to contribute to every number. We had one man of science, five essayists (serious and humorous), three poets, one novelist, and a couple of universal geniuses, who would give us anything we wanted. The first number was a great success, looked at from a quantitative standpoint if not from a qualitative one. The man of science gave us the first of a series of papers on "Familiar Domestic Insects." One of our poets filled three pages with a creditable imitation of the very poorest part of Mr. Bailey's *Festus*, entitled "A Soul's Yearnings;" and the other contributed an "Address to Summer" (it was then February), which really might have been written by Mrs. Hemans—either at a very tender or a very advanced age. The essays on the "Rights of Genius," and "Concerning a Pot of Pickled Onions," were really not so bad as they might

have been ; while the first two chapters of "Lancelot Daryl : a Psychological Romance," would certainly have made a sensation—I decline to say of what order—in a periodical much more ambitious than ours.

The second number of the *Target* was equal to the first,—some enthusiasts thought it even better ; but when the material for number three ought to have been coming in, clouds began to appear on our editorial horizon. One of the essayists took offence at the position in which his last paper had been placed ; another was ill and could write nothing ; and our "Festus" friend had become so enamoured of the daughter of the retired tobacconist who lived next door to him, that the ardour of his passion left him no time for literature. Most terrible of all, the psychological romancer fled to America with the avowed intention of joining one of the communities which Mr. Hepworth Dixon has so sympathetically described for us ; and "Lancelot Daryl" was left on our hands—a splendid fragment—a conundrum without an answer. Things grew worse and worse, and at last almost the only regular shots at the *Target* were made by the two editors. I convinced Pelican that our honour was involved in keeping up the magazine, and told him that if he would contribute the hits, I would, for my part, guarantee a supply of the misses. None of these latter need be reproduced ; but some of Pelican's archery studies, as he called them, may have an interest even now. One short essay may be given without

curtailment. He intended to write a number of such papers under the title of "Interpretations;" but none of the others were ever written, though I believe he had made notes referring to Spenser's "Fairy Queen," Shakespeare's "Tempest," Browning's "Childe Roland," and George MacDonald's "Phantastes," concerning which he had spoken so enthusiastically on the first evening of our acquaintance. Whether his guess at the meaning of Mr. Tennyson's poem is worth anything or nothing is hard to say. It is something in its favour that Pelican himself thoroughly believed in it.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT:

A TENTATIVE INTERPRETATION.

While reading again the Laureate's exquisite versification of this story, or legend, only a few evenings ago, I was struck for the first time by the suggestion of a hidden meaning which, whether consciously present to the poet or not, may, I think, fairly be extracted from the poem. I am inclined to set some value upon this idea, from the fact that it suddenly presented itself to me, and was not the result of any intellectual effort of my own. There are those who look upon all moral interpretations of works of pure art with suspicion; critics who contend that no picture or poem has any legitimate meaning beyond that which was without doubt in the artist's mind at the moment of production; and that the

search after a deeper significance is impertinent and frivolous, its end being rather the glorification of the critic than the exposition of the work of the master. There is some truth and some falsehood in these assertions. It cannot be denied that critical ingenuity has sometimes been wasted in the invention of forced and arbitrary significations; but still less can it be denied that the message of every real work of art is implied and hinted at rather than expressed, and that the lines of the picture or the words of the poem are rather of the nature of sacramental symbols than of mathematical definitions. It may be said, indeed, to be one sign of a great artistic work that no single interpretation is exhaustive of it; but that its fullest and most truthful meaning is the one which lies deepest and is, perhaps, seen last.

The legend of the "Lady of Shalott," as given by the poet is a very simple one, and it is left to make its own impression upon the reader. Here are a few of the earlier stanzas.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river

Flowing down to Camelot.

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle embowers

The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses ; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed

Skimming down to Camelot.

But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land ?

The Lady of Shalott.

* * * * *

And moving through a mirror clear,
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear :
There she sees the highway near

Winding down to Camelot :

There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village churls,
And the red cloaks of market-girls

Pass onward from Shalott.

It appears to me that this history may be regarded as representative of the history of a woman living in a conventional world,—the world in which so many people live their whole lives,—a world whose inhabitants do not come into contact with the true substance of

things around them, but to whom these things appear, not as they are in themselves, but as reflections in a mirror which, while it registers faithfully enough some few outside aspects, hides altogether the living soul by which those aspects are produced and governed. Urged by a necessity of nature, the Lady of Shalott has found a task in the execution of which her mind is occupied and her hours are spent.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay,—

a web which symbolizes that daily work which is the natural lot of all ; not work in the restricted sense of physical labour, but including all the conscious energies of soul and mind and body,—all the strivings of conscience, all the outgoings of affection, all the exercises of intellect, all the trivial tasks, the little conflicts which make the woven web of every life. The things seen in the mirror—things which are but the reflections of the unknown true—form the materials of the web's fantastic design : in other words, her life is in harmony with the conventional, unreal world in which she lives. Her thoughts and feelings, her words and actions, are all outlined and coloured by the influence of the phantasmal panorama which daily passes before her eyes. In this matter she is but a representative of thousands of men and women whose life in the world is an external affair altogether ; who live from the surface, not from the centre of their being ; men and women who gaze

into each other's eyes and merely mark variations of light and colour, not knowing, nor caring to know, anything of the soul behind. It is for these people that what we call conventionalities exist, those laws and customs which neither rise out of, nor are founded on, the inherent nature of things; but on those artificial conditions which must necessarily come into being when the deeper side of life is ignored. But just because these conventional laws are unnatural and arbitrary—because they have no foundation in the central truth of things—they must needs be enforced by imposing sanctions and vague threats of portentous penalties.

There she weaves by night and day,
A magic web with colours gay :
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay,
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

But the Lady of Shalott has something within her which cannot always be satisfied with a mirror world. She is an Undine, with a soul which is not yet hers, but is waiting to be born within her when the moment comes. Of this coming the poem gives plain fore-warnings. We are told how—

sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights came riding two and two ;

and then we have the line—

She had no loyal knight and true ;

which seems as if it might be the inarticulate cry of the unborn soul, put by the poet into articulate form. In the next verse the indication grows even clearer still.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights ;
For often through the silent nights
A funeral with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot :
*Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed,
" I AM HALF SICK OF SHADOWS," said
The Lady of Shalott.*

The two walking under the moon rouse something that has not been roused before; and then, just when she is ready for it, comes the one event of her existence : for Sir Lancelot rides by, and with him ride love, life, and death ; the first two together, the last close behind.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed,
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode,
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,—
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
" Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,

She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror cracked from side to side ;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

Yes, the curse is come upon her,—come irrevocably ; for the Lady of Shalott is one of those whose aspirations are larger than their capacities ; who have yearnings which are too great for them,—yearnings which prompt them to break the chains with which they are bound, only to find that what they thought were fetters were supports as well, without which they fall helplessly, to be trodden to death unpitied and unheeded. There are thousands who are living in what they dimly feel to be a world of reflections not of substances, of appearances not of realities ; but ever and anon they feel that this is not all there is of life, and they, like the Lady of Shalott, are half sick of shadows. Still, the illusions gather round them again as the moment of illumination passes away, until something comes, most probably in the shape of a supreme passion, which sweeps the old world's illusions away for ever, and reveals the new world of realities lying all round them. Then is the testing time. Have they courage to meet as foes the conventional phantoms they have spurned as friends ? Have they limbs with which they can stand and work alone ? Have they lungs

that can breathe the sharp, new air? Have they hearts that can sustain the pressure of the larger life? If they have these things,—well: if not, there is nothing for them but the terrible failure of those who enter upon a warfare at their own charges, unarmed and unprepared. Tired of weary walking in a world of shadows they have tried to soar into a world of light; but their wings have failed them like the wings of Icarus, and, falling headlong, they can even walk no more. They can only die; and on their grave-stone the world writes its brief, scornful epitaph, *væ victis*.

To enliven the pages of the *Target*, which, in spite of the undoubted genius of all our archers, were at times somewhat dull, Pelican produced numberless humorous sketches; but almost all of them had some temporary or local application, and were, moreover, hastily and carelessly written to fill some unexpected vacancy. I never was enthusiastic about them, and their author held them in profound contempt, destroying them ruthlessly whenever he could lay hands upon them. Indeed, Pelican's humour—and I think this is characteristic of the humour of all essentially meditative people—manifested itself rather in his talk than in his writing. It was the foam and spray of his mind, which was only brought into being by the storm of debate or the brisk breeze of social chat. If I may change my figure, I will say that the scintillant spark flashed most frequently

when he could strike some angle of his own mind sharply against an opposing angle in the mind of another ; and I suppose it was from this cause that even his letters had much more of the true humorous element than had those productions of his which were written with a deliberately comic intent. The latter were apt to be somewhat forced and heavy, except when produced, as they occasionally were, during a veritable *afflatus* of fun. Then his mirth would be free, fluent, and almost boisterous ; but on these occasions there was sure to be a strong infusion of the *personal* element ; I do not mean of satire or sarcasm necessarily, but just that sort of infusion which is found in most of the essays of Charles Lamb. "You see," he said to me one day, "it is so hard for me to be funny ; I have such a narrow range of subjects. A man like Dickens can grind fun out of a pump, or a door-knocker, or a bedstead, or anything in the universe, while I can do nothing whatever unless I have men and women, with the additional disadvantage of being set down in a place where, after you have contemplated them for a little while, the men and women seem all alike. I am really an ill-used individual. I feel just as Dickens would feel if he were shut up in a prison with a hundred pumps, and a hundred bedsteads, all of the same pattern, and were told that he must fill a shilling number with jokes upon them, once a month for twenty years."

Pelican's strength, therefore, was thrown into those

graver papers in which he could give his critical and speculative faculties full play; and the two or three little bits of criticism which follow show something of the ordinary bent of his mind, and show also what were the literary and intellectual characteristics which most strongly appealed to him. In the paragraph concerning the *Mill on the Floss*, there is more than one opinion expressed which will be hesitatingly received or unhesitatingly rejected by most readers. His passing attack on Shakspeare will be universally regarded as an act of literary treason; but he always had rather heretical views of the claims of the Swan of Avon.

He held the theory that, as before the time of Coleridge, Shakspeare had been unduly neglected, so, since that time he had been extravagantly exalted; and that a second reaction, perhaps more unreasonable than the first, was not far distant. "The Shakspeare religion may be all very well for you," said he to an enthusiast, "but I hardly see my way yet to accepting him as a literary Messiah. When I am a little less busy, however, I will give some time to a study of the evidences, and then you shall hear the result." Another of his extravagant and daring utterances was to the effect that the character of Midwinter in Mr. Wilkie Collins' "Armada" was equal in conception, if not in execution, to Shakspeare's character of Hamlet. A man who could deliberately say this was obviously in a hopeless condition.

For the other portion of the paragraph a better defence might perhaps be made. Pelican's persistent preference of the *Mill on the Floss* to its great predecessor, was not maintained in ignorance of the artistic superiority of the older work, but for artistic merit, *as such*, he cared very little. The construction of a book was a secondary matter with him, unless the whole merit of the work depended upon it. The art which helped to show a thing clearly and truly he valued as highly as any one ; as his own words, I think, sufficiently show.

The *Mill on the Floss* is pervaded throughout by the noble quality which strikes one so forcibly in all George Eliot's works, and which, even in these days of realistic art, is so rare ;—the more than Shakspearian fidelity to the truth of nature. I say *more than Shakspearian*, because Shakspeare—wonderful painter of men and women as he is—is sometimes led captive by his own power, and we have a wealth of poetry, or thought, or wit, which cannot but strike us as incongruous and untrue. Such a catastrophe never befalls George Eliot. The activity of her penetrative imagination is not more marked than its harmonious restraint ; she is always master of her faculties, never their slave. This absolute imaginative truthfulness is, as I have said, a conspicuous characteristic of all her books ; but it is more striking and remarkable in the *Mill on the Floss* than it is in *Adam Bede* ; because in the former book she has to

deal with characters infinitely more difficult to pourtray faithfully than those which appear in the pages of the latter. Maggie, Tom, and Philip have a complexity of moral nature which renders it singularly difficult so to draw them that they shall stand out from the canvas as real living human beings, with every feature of that nature shown in proper focus. Adam Bede, Hetty, Dinah, and Arthur, are all *simple* natures, devoid of those inconsistencies which baffle us so often when we attempt the study of character. We can soon sum them up, and note down their ruling qualities. Adam is conscientious, persistent, self-reliant, tender. Hetty is vain, selfish, ambitious. Dinah is devoted, unselfish, spiritual. Arthur is good-natured, pleasure-loving, weak. How easy it is thus to describe and define the personages in *Adam Bede*—all characters simple in nature and narrow in range. You will not find it so easy thus to label those in the *Mill on the Floss*, for they are creations of greater complexity and wider humanity. They differ from the characters in *Adam Bede* as a chord in music differs from a single note, or as a mighty chorus, with individual discords but one pervading harmony, differs from the simple melody of a popular air. Of course the latter appeal to a wider audience, but we can hardly consider that fact a proof of superior merit.


The book not only gives us the impression of singular fidelity to truth and nature—which is, as commonly, though wrongly understood, one of the passive literary

virtues,—but of altogether exceptional intellectual activity, constantly present, and yet always restrained, and never displayed for the mere purpose of display. Mr. Ruskin says that those pictures convey “the highest ideas of power, which attain the most perfect end with the slightest possible means; not, observe, those in which though much has been done with little, *all* has not been done; but from the picture in which *all* *has* been done, and yet not a touch thrown away.” There could not be a better description of George Eliot’s work, and particularly of the kind of work she has produced in this book. Every little sketch, however subordinate, is perfectly finished; not a word is wasted; not an epithet wrongly placed; every stroke tells: and yet the manifestations of this perfect art are so subtle, that while reading it does not strike us as art at all. Only when we close the book do we receive the impression of its wonderful power. We see then how everything needful has been accomplished with such perfect ease. There are no long-winded analyses of character, but their place has been more than supplied by a thousand minute creative touches; and we feel that we know Mrs. Tulliver, and Maggie, and Tom, and Philip, much better than we know many of our most intimate friends.

There is yet to be mentioned the characteristic which, above all others—or perhaps I ought to say, when combined with all the others—makes this work

great, with what is to me a unique greatness. It does not play in the shallows of human nature, but goes down into the depths, speaking not alone to our minds but to our spirits. Those who know anything of a life of inner conflict will read Maggie's history not as a mere history, but as a revelation. One of the main reasons for the indifference to the book which is felt by some who were enthusiastic in their reception of *Adam Bede*, is that they have not *lived* enough to bring its almost awful reality home to them. Their lives have been peaceful pools of Siloam, and they cannot understand the mystery of the troubled waters of Bethesda. But there are those to whom Maggie's aspirations, and conflicts, and defeats, and victories are all matters of the most intimate personal experience, and to them her history has a fascination wholly inexplicable to those whose lives are quieter and more shallow. These latter persons cannot be made to feel it, but it is there, nevertheless.

Emerson is a hero-worshipper, and his heroes are ideas. He has only one thought at a time, and he holds it before his eyes, like a piece of coloured glass, and sees everything through it. In one page there is nothing in the universe but sympathy; in another nothing but supply and demand, or ebb and flow. It is fortunate that he can thus change his medium of vision, or his books would be monomaniacal productions.



As it is, they are somewhat perplexing to the student who comes upon them for the first time, for they give two opposite poles of thought, and leave the reader to find out the connecting link between them—the over-reaching, reconciling truth which makes them not two but one. He tells us, for instance, in one chapter of his *Conduct of Life* that we are nothing without power, and that the secret of power is concentration. From the next chapter we learn that we are equally nothing without culture, and that the secret of culture is diffusion. By thus giving the rein to the thought of the moment, and letting it take him where it will, he makes his books curiously interesting and stimulating ; but he also makes them intellectually dangerous to those who have not his power of turning “right-about-face” to the other truth which he has left far behind but never forgotten. Notwithstanding all this, I find that my appreciation of Emerson increases instead of diminishing ; for as I see deeper into the secret of his method, I feel more strongly its real value. Every truth, he seems to say, is worshipful, but no truth is exclusively to be worshipped :

“All are needed by each one ;
Nothing is fair or good alone.”

He is one of the most suggestive of modern writers, for he is an intellectual explorer who is never afraid. He is always ready and eager to stray from the beaten literary highway, where every visible object has long

ago been analysed and described, into that dimly-lighted region which lies all around, where thoughts seem both too large and too impalpable for language.

People talk of Ruskin's eloquent fluency; but what really distinguishes his style is the preservation of a perfect union of the loftiest eloquence with the most unerring accuracy of word and phrase. His way of saying a thing may be the grandest, but it is the truest as well—perhaps grandest because truest. Even Tennyson's accuracy and felicity in the choice of language are not more perfect than Ruskin's; but they are more conspicuous, because in his poetry there is less apparent abandonment than there is in Ruskin's prose. They both have a certain mannerism, which in Ruskin's case tends to throw into relief his marvellous eloquence, and to cast into the shade his scientific precision; while in the case of Tennyson, the exquisite finish blinds the eye of the superficial critic to the poetic spontaneity which is not less present.

I could give many more of Pelican's miniature criticisms; but I must not extend this chapter to a disproportionate length, and I want to make room for some more of his aims at the *Target* from another position than that of the critic. They are but fragments, and in most cases were not written for the magazine, but were, like the humorous contributions, inserted

at the last moment, when all other matter failed him. A few of them appeared in several numbers under the general title of—

ARROW FLIGHTS FROM A HOME-MADE BOW.


In thinking of the forces of nature which hem us round with bands of fate, it is some consolation to know that the same law which gives them their power confines their range. The sea can drown, it cannot intoxicate us: the rock may fall and crush our limbs, but it has no power over our consciences. Thus, the resources of nature are limited, while those of man are infinite; and, in a fair conflict, nature will always have the worst of it. The universe was made for man, not man for the universe. This may sound presumptuous, but never incredible to those who believe that in the person of One member of the race the human nature has been absorbed into the Divine.

No man ever does what is really his *best*: that is, no man ever puts his whole self into any work which he produces; because, if he bring his entire activity to bear upon the matter in hand, the very act of thus bringing it to bear increases the possibilities of activity, so that, in the supreme moment of completion he feels that he possesses a margin of power and insight over and above that which he has used in production. A work of art upon which the entire actual power of the artist has been

exerted may be compared to the dial-plate of the machine—generally seen at rural fairs—which registers the strength of the arm by which the buffer has been struck ; and, in the case of the artist, the very act of striking—that is, the act of producing his greatest achievement—gives him power to touch a higher number on the register ; or, to drop the metaphor, it enables him to produce something better than that which yesterday was his best.

Thus, the man who puts his thoughts into a visible form is never satisfied, for when his *summum bonum* is attained, it is his *summum bonum* no longer. He is constantly ascending a mountain, and the moment he reaches what seems to him the highest peak, a higher one becomes visible, and again a higher. The summit he never reaches, for it is the mountain of perfection, and is as high as heaven. Well may he be dissatisfied ; and yet his dissatisfaction is not only noble, but also in a sense—paradoxical as it may seem—serenely happy.

I think that most people who care anything for nature, when they have left beautiful scenery, have a sense of something like remorse, as if they had only half seen it ; and a passionate, almost painful, desire to return, if only for half an hour, that they may do it justice and atone for their wrongful neglect. Why is this ? I think it must be that when in the presence of the unveiled loveliness of nature—when taken into one of her holy places,



our whole being is flooded with emotion which is unconscious of itself; but when we retire into the solitude of our chamber, feeling crystallizes into thought, and we long for a return that we may enjoy feeling and thought in one.

Stupid people open their mouths in wonder at a novel like *Jane Eyre* being produced by a young woman who had lived all her life in an obscure Yorkshire village; because, as they say, she had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with human nature. What arrant nonsense this is. Human nature is the same everywhere; and he who cannot find an inexhaustible field of study and suggestion in his native village—or, may I not say, within the walls of his own home—will not find it in the metropolis, or the continent, or the wide world. When I journeyed two thousand miles eastward and watched the people there; saw how they lived, how they thought, how they spoke; I was much more struck by the oldness than by the novelty. I found no manifestation of human nature in the streets of Smyrna which I had not left behind me in the lanes of Brookfield.

Genius is nothing but persistent sensibility. Every man would be a genius if he could either lengthen his moments of inspiration into hours, or recall through hours the vision of truth or beauty which the moment brought. I am, of course, assuming that every man has

such moments, which may be disputed ; though it seems to me it must be true, for life without them would be too poor a gift for God to bestow.

"Poetry, like science, has its final precision ; and there are expressions of poetic knowledge which can no more be re-written than could the elements of geometry. There are pieces of poetic language which, try as men will they will simply have to recur to, and confess that it has been done before them." These are the words of Arthur Hugh Clough, and they are singularly truthful and suggestive. What he says of the highest order of poetry, ought to be true of prose—true of all literary art. Every thought and feeling should be so expressed that the expression shall at once be recognised as a final and adequate embodiment of that which has been impressed upon the mind of the writer. But how little there is of this : how much of our literature is a doing over again of what has been imperfectly done before ; and who can estimate the waste of power which such a method necessarily involves ?

When after long, and perhaps painful, endeavour we manage to solve some difficult problem, the solution does not generally come as the conscious result of our striving, but as a sudden flash of revelation. All at once the heaven opens, a ray strikes down, and we see what lies at the end of our journey, though our feet may

only have travelled half the way. The attainment of the truth seems so utterly independent of our effort, that we are apt to think our toil has been vain, until we see that although truth does not come as the direct and palpable result of labour, there is, nevertheless, a necessity for it, as without it we can never reach the condition in which the revelation of truth is possible. Thoughtful toil neither brings us to truth, nor truth to us; but it does enable us to recognise and receive it when it presents itself to us,—and it does *that* unceasingly.

Here I must really stay my hand. Making quotations is like eating opium and telling lies; so easy to begin, so difficult to leave off. As the *Target*, like all other human institutions, did come to an end at last, I should have to end somewhere, and this point seems as favourable as any other. As a sort of appropriate ornamental finish to the chapter, I may as well give Pelican's sole poetical contribution to our Brookfield literary organ. He was rather shy of exhibiting his rhyming powers among his neighbours, and was only induced to insert his verses after the final desertion of our three poets. Many years after they were written, a strikingly similar poem appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*; a fact, the mention of which cannot possibly be misunderstood by any sensible person. I may as well, however, render myself perfectly safe by expressing my profound conviction that the author of that poem had *not* seen the *Target*.

AN INVITATION.

Come, when spring touches with gentle finger
The snows that linger
Among the hills ;
When to our homestead return the swallows,
And in the hollows
Bloom daffodils.

Or, if thou tarry, come with the summer—
That welcome comer—
Welcome as he ;
When noon-tide sunshine beats on the meadow,
A seat in shadow
We'll keep for thee.

Or, if it please thee, come to the reaping,
When to safe keeping
They bring the sheaves ;
When autumn decketh with coloured splendour
And pathos tender
The dying leaves.

Or, come and warm us when winter freezes,
And northern breezes
Are keen and cold,
With loving glances, and close hand-pressings,
And fervent blessings
That grow not old.

Nay! do not linger : for each to-morrow
Will break in sorrow
If thou delay :
Come to us quickly ; our hearts are burning
With tender yearning :
Come, come to-day.

IV.

OUT OF DOORS.

DURING the summer months that part of Pelican's nature which he called his vagabond soul always asserted itself. From being a hermit, contentedly chained to his cell, he became a restless Bedouin wanderer, and he and I made excursions far and near. Of all the hours I spent in his society I think these were the most delightful, and I am sure they were often the most amusing. He used sometimes to say as we started upon a pilgrimage, "Now let us throw away all our conventionalities;" and as his most conventional moods seemed to the majority of his acquaintances outrageously Bohemian, it was well that we were generally alone in our rambles. His costume was made the first point of departure from the ordinary path. Of it, as a whole, I recollect little except the general effect; but I have a distinct remembrance of the head-piece, which consisted of a bright scarlet Turkish *fez* with an enormous tassel hanging down behind. Sometimes I implored him to abandon this heathen covering, but he solemnly assured me that, when considered in the light of pure reason, my chimney-pot hat was much more objectionable than his *fez*, and that my want of appreciation only proved that I had no eye for colour. One very hot summer he

made a further move in the Oriental direction, and robed himself from head to foot in some white material which looked like thick calico. Again I remonstrated strongly, but the more I said the more he laughed; and at last I weakly consented to give him the countenance of my company and to take my share of the derisive howls with which he was greeted by the juvenile population of the unsophisticated villages through which we passed.

In spite of his little eccentricities, perhaps to some extent because of them, Pelican was the very best companion in a rural excursion I ever knew. Some pedestrian ramblers throw all their energies into their limbs and relapse into gloomy silence, but to this terrible class he never belonged. Nature stimulated him like wine, and he was intellectually at his best when the grass was under his feet and the air of God was blowing about his head. In fact, he had a theory which I always laughed at as one of his extravagances, but which I am inclined to think better of now, that no man could arrive at absolutely right views, particularly of moral and social subjects, who did not spend most of his time in the unadulterated country. He used to support this thesis by very ingenious arguments; but he never made any impression upon the members of our somewhat unimaginative circle at Brookfield. Except as the only available place for a picnic, they leaned to the opinion of Lord Dundreary, that "the countwy ith a mithtake;" which

was exactly what Pelican thought of the town, until he saw the truth of a verdict of a wise friend of ours who had lived long enough to learn "the falsehood of extremes." "It is not quite right," said good Dr. H—— to Pelican and me one day, "to say, as Cowper says, 'God made the country, and man made the town : ' the fact is, God made both, and man has spoiled both ; but there is something of the Divine still left everywhere."

Pelican had at one time a large book filled with sketches of our travels, which he entitled, "The Peregrinations of Paul and Solomon ;" but it does not seem to have been preserved, for it is not to be found in the black box. The Solomon was of course the writer of these reminiscences. Pelican was fond of giving nicknames, more or less appropriate, to people whom he liked ; but I never knew exactly why I was associated in his mind with the philosophical king. I fear there may have been some latent irony in the name, but on this matter prolonged speculation might be painful.

Though the "Peregrinations" are gone, I find a memento of one of our excursions in the shape of a short essay and a couple of sonnets, written during a brief holiday we spent together on the banks of Windermere, at the latter end of the first summer of our acquaintance. We had just begun to enjoy ourselves, when I was unexpectedly compelled by business to leave him for two or three days, and when I returned I found (to use his own words) that he had flown for consolation to the bottle—

~~the~~ ~~little~~—and one of the main results of the out-
~~lined~~ ~~was~~ this paper, which he called,—

IN THE WOOD : A WINDERMERE REVERIE.

I have been here at Windermere for a week ; and never, I think, has a week seemed so strangely short or so strangely long. I know that were I to go home to-morrow I should feel as if I had never left it, but had merely been visited by a sweet day-dream of purple hills, and glancing wavelets, and rustling leaves. And yet I seem to be separated from those quiet uneventful home-days by a long age of strange, rapturous, vivid existence. Trite enough is the saying that a lifetime of bliss or agony may be crowded into an hour ; but the triteness vanishes when the hour comes, and he to whom it comes finds the old commonplace all at once transformed into a new truth. Parrot-like, he has been repeating the familiar formula all his life ; man-like, he has been fancying that he understood it : but some new experience becomes his, and a hidden revelation flashes out upon him from the ancient household words. All commonplaces seem dead, but they have a latent vitality ; and we never know at what hour of our existence the dry bony aphorism or proverb, which we have flippantly tossed about since childhood, may start into unsuspected life. As our life becomes wider, and deeper, and more intense, our list of commonplaces becomes shorter and shorter ; for a commonplace is a truth acknowledged but

not realized,—a thread of familiar colour not yet cast by the flying shuttle of destiny across the lengthening web of our individual history. Mrs. Browning, in one of her wonderfully vivid poems, writes,—

“ I said in under breath
All our life is mixed with death ;”

and it is just because we lack complete vitality of nature that so many things are commonplace to us. There is but one Being in whom life is not thus mixed with death ; and it is as certain that to God nothing is commonplace, as it is that with Him nothing is impossible.

I came here to rest, and I have thoroughly made up my mind to give myself over to delicious idleness. I think it simply painful to feel it a duty to “do” the regular tourist round. I have no sympathy with the man who says *perdidi diem* at the end of every day which has not made him acquainted with half a dozen lakes, or hills, or waterfalls, which he has never seen before, and does not care ever to see again. I do not value such chance introductions either to men or places, for their only effect is to fill the mind with a throng of confused, featureless images. The real man does not unveil himself in the first five minutes of ceremonious conversation, and the “open secret” of nature is not often read from the top of a stage-coach. Any man may at any time go, like Mahomet, to the mountain ; but if he would have the mountain come to him—that is, if he would feel the spirit of the mountain enter into *his*

spirit and possess it—he must yield himself up to what Wordsworth, with exquisite accuracy of expression, calls a “*new passiveness*.”

~~This new passiveness~~ I have endeavoured to cultivate. I have discovered two or three of the pleasantest of walks and I find that familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, increases the love with which I regard every tree or clamber of fern, or distant shimmer of sunlighted waters. An ever-increasing delight in the simplest natural objects grows upon me day by day, and I find myself scrutinizing with a loving eye the clinging growth of the wild ivy which clothes with beauty the ruinous wall of weather-beaten stone, and extracting, somehow or other, a new and strange pleasure from the contemplation of waving grasses and gurgling streamlets.

But my favourite haunt is the wood, where all the day long I often lie, stretched out upon the mossy turf, and shaded by the drooping ferns; my limbs subdued by a pleasant lassitude; my soul steeped in an all-controlling sense of delicious inactivity, undisturbed by perplexing thought or exciting emotion, conscious of naught but a vague indescribable satisfaction—the deep, exquisite, painless joy of calm. This painlessness of joy is one of the essential characteristics of woodland repose. There have been times when, coming all at once upon some sublime or marvellously beautiful piece of scenery, I have experienced a feeling of delight so intense as to be almost agonizing. It is possible to be blinded by excess

of light, and it is equally possible to be pained by vividness of sudden pleasure. But amid these quieter beauties which become familiar through hours of sweet fellowship, joy loses the edge which makes it too keen for happiness; and the soul, though not drawn in awed suddenness of surprise up to the third heaven, is nevertheless borne steadily through the upper air of the spirit by unseen hands, and is soothed into repose by a tender flutter of angels' wings. While I lie upon my woodland resting-place, and feel this exquisite bliss entering my spirit, I feel tempted to say, with the "mild-eyed melancholy lotos eaters,"—

"There is no joy but calm."

And then, thinking of the marvellous expressional power of Mr. Tennyson's great poem, I remember how, in the choric song which came murmuringly from between the languid lips of the drowsy wanderers, there are lines, rich in strange, sleepy music, which speak of the sequestered woodland retreat as the place in which, more than in any other, men find "long rest and dreamful ease."

"Lo, in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud,
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care;
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and, turning yellow,
Falls, and floats adown the air."

This special wood, which is my resort, has endless charms

which are all its own ; but it has also human associations which invest it with a deeper interest. Every day, as I stroll lazily towards the little nook which I have chosen for my own retreat, I pass the cottage—for it is little more—in which were spent the happiest years in the life of Christopher North. There is one room at the end of the house with long windows formed of many panes of glass, like the windows of a public hall ; and in that room, I am told, some of the most successful of his famous *Recreations* were written. One can imagine him sitting or lying on the miniature lawn in front of the house, from which the lake and the opposite pine-covered hill could always be seen, thinking out one of his fine vigorous essays, or arranging the materials for one of the genial, humorous, sarcastic *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. Considering man simply as an animal, what a fine specimen of the race Wilson was. He was, of course, great as a man of mind ; but I am inclined to think that his physical powers and capacities were even more remarkable than his mental ones. There probably never was a man in whom a *perfect* balance of soul and body existed ; and there can be little doubt that in Wilson, the flesh (not using the word in any degraded sense) rather than the spirit was the ruling power. His life was *essentially* one of sensation rather than of thought ; he was sometimes meditative, but his very meditation was emotional. In the room with the long windows he used to have his Sunday cock-fights ; and I doubt not he rejoiced greatly

at the sight of the fierce onset, and at the sound of the shrill crow of triumph. From these odd devotional exercises Christopher would doubtless extract a fuller rapture than he ever felt at the completion of the most felicitously expressed article for *Blackwood*; and the victory of a favourite bird would cause a thrill of ecstasy such as the ordinary man of letters knows not of.

A wood like this is just the right place for any man who, like Wilson, has a keen sensitiveness to all the sights and sounds of nature, but whose tendency is to ignore the purely spiritual side of life. For here all these sights and sounds seem suggestive of strange presences of which they are the sensible embodiments. "There is a spirit in the woods," and no man of quick sensibilities can remain long unconscious of a subtle spirit touch, that in a moment puts an end to laughter and subdues the soul to worship. As I enter into the shadows of the beeches, a feeling of reverence steals over me, as if I were crossing the threshold of a cathedral. Places like this seem nearer the frontier of the spiritual world than the hot, sweltering, dusty streets of towns; so much so, that here atheism seems impossible. It is not that there are so many illustrations of the design-argument that the doubter must necessarily be convinced; for it appears to me that the most conclusive argument is not *necessarily* convincing to any man; but the whole atmosphere is, as it were, so full of God, that it seems as if a doubt of Him could not arise.

No man, I think, is entirely the slave of logic. In the driest hardest nature there are places, hidden perhaps from the world, but none the less really there, which are sensitive to those subtler, diviner influences, for ever inexpressible by logical formulæ, which abide in the shadows of the beeches, and the pebbles of the brook, and the brooding sunlight on distant hills,—influences which, unrecognised and unchallenged, enter the spirit, and transform, by mysterious spiritual chemistry, whatever is hard and materialistic into something tremblingly tender and universally appreciative.

“One impulse from a vernal wood
Can teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.”

The teaching of the sage is bounded and limited by words and forms; he cannot tell to the world all he knows; much less can he communicate the feeling or presentiment (if I may call it so) which he has of truths yet unattained, which, though through a glass darkly, he still sees, like heavenly angels, dimly visible through earthly mists. But the woodland influences are not thus limited in their action. Nature is free from the bondage of words. She has “no speech nor language;” but nevertheless her voice is heard, and her *Lieder ohne Worte* touch, with an electric thrill, places which lie too deep in the soul to be accessible to the articulate word-songs of humanity. Words are

the visible and audible symbols of things known and defined ; but the charm of nature lies in the fact that, in communion with her, we are impressed by the strange nearness of "worlds not realized,"—mystical worlds,—the existence of which is felt and believed, but not demonstrated. Words are representatives of things present and palpable ; nature's wordless harmonies are suggestive of things far past and dimly remembered. In the woods I seem to meet a phantom of myself ; but it is not the self of to-day, or of last spring, but of an immemorial year from which I am separated by a mysterious interval of unconsciousness. Only a man who had been consecrated to the priesthood of nature could possibly have written that marvellous "*Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*;" and it is a poem which must for ever be meaningless to the mere townsman ; for only amid the awful silence of the solitary places—and there always—the soul of such a one is overshadowed with the inevitable thought, that—

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Had somewhere else its setting,
And cometh from afar."

Such are the thoughts and feelings that come to me as I lie on the short mossy grass, shaded by the boughs of the spreading beech. It may seem rather an odd preference, but I have always loved the beech as I love


no other tree. This might be the result of association, but when I search for the links in the chain, I am unable to find them. I am inclined to think that I love it simply for its own sake. In the excess of my devotion I am apt to wonder that poets do not oftener sing its praises. It has not the rugged majesty of the oak, nor the dignified grace of the elm, but to me it seems pre-eminently a *social* tree, and in the shadow of its branches, as in the society of a friend, I have a pleasing sense of home. I reverence the ancient oak, I admire the lofty elm, but it is under the beech that I always wish to rest. Its principal, and I think its most fascinating, characteristic is what—for want of a better word—I call *leafiness*, by which I mean that peculiar fulness and yet separateness of foliage which belongs to it alone among English trees, and which makes its crossing boughs and interlacing twigs a mass of exquisite forest embroidery. The sycamore has all its fulness, and the poplar all its separateness, of leafage; but the one presents to the eye only an opaque mass of dull green, and the other has a certain fragmentariness of aspect which gives no promise of grateful shade. And so I choose the beech as the tree under which I think my thoughts, good, bad, and indifferent, and dream my day-dreams, in which dryads and wood-nymphs glide among the pine-stems, and naiads of beguiling beauty sing softly by the stream. Through all my meditations the music of that stream runs like

a silver thread of melody, and I think how, for centuries before man was soothed by its lulling murmur, it babbled and chattered in the listening ear of God. Nor can I doubt that even the Infinite Mind found pleasure in the earthly music which fairly though faintly corresponded to celestial harmonies. For it is thus that He rejoices in the things that He has made. Not alone surely to awe the spirit or to gladden the heart of man was the sharp cloven mountain-peak upheaved into the still air, or the autumn leaves tinted with russet, and crimson, and gold; it must be that the Being whose work they are, and whose nature they mysteriously reveal, feels an ineffable incomprehensible joy in the ceaseless outlook upon these sacramental representations of Himself. They are indeed passages of heavenly poetry written not in words; blossomings of the Divine Nature whose only utility lies in their eternal beauty, which have no end outside of themselves save to declare His glory for whose pleasure they were created.

I do not find among Pelican's recorded thoughts on the influences of nature anything else so rounded and complete as this paper; but that is not to be wondered at, for our visit to the Lakes was quite an exceptional treat. As a general rule, we had to content ourselves with landscape of a much more ordinary character, consisting for the most part of very long straight roads and

very flat fields ; but, luckily for Pelican, grass and trees were all that were necessary to make him perfectly happy. The *green* had such a fascination for him. I remember well how one bright day in June, when we were sitting on a grassy slope overlooking miles of sun-lighted meadow land, he broke a long silence by saying, "I wonder what it is in the nature of God that the colour of green represents and shows forth. There must be *something*, for He loves it so much that He has painted the whole earth with it. We have little bits of blue and crimson and yellow, and even of brown and black ; but on the whole it is a green world. If He loves the green, He must do so because it corresponds to something in Himself, and the colour of the landscape is charged with some revelation which I suppose we should be able to read as plainly as the Sermon on the Mount if our eyes were only open to see the letters, and our hearts clear to make them into words."

Speculations like this were never with Pelican mere speculations without some kind of dogmatic basis to rest upon. After every flight into the empyrean he dropped down to earth again to try to find some principle of justification for his aerial excursion. What was said of Burke might be said of him, that he formed his opinions like a fanatic, and then defended them, or at any rate endeavoured to defend them, like a philosopher. He would have found very little difficulty, some basis even, for a fanciful hypothesis like the one



just recorded. And indeed there is a considerable show of reason in its favour. Every action of an intelligent being ought to be characteristic; that is, everything which is produced ought to be a visible representation of some portion of the mind of the producer. The productions of men are, perhaps, never completely representative of their inner natures; but this is only because all human minds, even the most original, are to some extent under the bondage of conventionality; and therefore they act not altogether from their own spontaneous volitions, but from the volitions of the other minds among whom they move. Many or a man's actions have no individual character; they tell you nothing about himself, but only about the condition of the little world in which he lives. But the nature of God is not thus influenced; His actions are not thus restrained; and, therefore, each work of His is not only a work but a *word*, and everything which comes from His hand must of necessity be characteristic of Himself, must be representative of something in the Divine mind or heart.

The sonnets, to which reference has been made, were written very soon after the reverie in the wood. I think the latter of the two was suggested by Mr. Hinton's book, called "*Man and his Dwelling-Place*," which Pelican was, just at that time, studying with great interest. His liking for it was hardly to be wondered

at ; for it is a book which presents the uncommon combination of ingenuity and earnestness, and abounds moreover, in instances of very rare and delicate spiritual insight. Minds who love to see thoughts sharply outlined would be repelled by it ; but for Pelican its vague suggestiveness had a wonderful charm. He, like the author, had brooded over the mysterious link between man and nature, and had always maintained that some change in us, of what kind we know not, was all that was necessary for the full unveiling to us of the life and meaning of the universe. "I feel sometimes," he said, "as if I were just on the brink of some great revelation, and I think other people feel so too ; but then we never get over the brink. I wonder if death will take us over, or if it needs some other and more radical transformation." And, then, with a gleam of fun in his eye,—“I think I know one or two people who would need something more than killing even to make them think Grasmere or Helvellyn a finer sight than a bale of cotton or a mutton chop.”

Let us hope these good people will not trouble themselves with Pelican's sonnets, for I very much fear that their attractions—if they have any—are neither cottony nor muttonish. Here they are :—

POETRY AND POETRY.

Deep in the wood upon a bank I lay
Reading a poet's verses in a nook

Fit for a fairy revel ; but the book
Fell from my hand ere long ; the ceaseless play
Of glancing sunlight which did never stay
A moment on each leaf, the sleepy hum
Of insects, all the sights and sounds that come
To woodland wanderers drew my mind away.
Those written poems seemed all incomplete,
For in all things around—sky, trees, and lake,
Which glittered far below—there seemed to beat
A heart that throbbed as if 'twould almost break
With God's own poetry, sublime and sweet :
I heard as in a dream nor cared to wake.

LIFE IN NATURE.

It cannot surely be that they are dead—
Those far-off hills on which the sunshine broods ;
These tangled trees ; that lake whose varying moods
Of deep still calm or sudden tempest shed
Strange influence. I gaze, and I am led
Out of myself ; there seems in them a life
Which answers unto mine, and the wild strife
Which stirred my soul an hour ago has fled.
Oh ! that for once this dulled and deadened ear
Might be attuned to catch their mystic speech ;
But I am bound by sense, and only hear
The lake waves plashing on the pebbly beach ;
And, though all nature lives and speaks, I fear
Her deepest wisdom lies beyond our reach.

V.

A CHAPTER OF TALK.

AS the second winter of our acquaintance drew on, Pelican and I were compelled to forsake the fields for the fireside. My friendship for him had matured very quickly, but I think my thorough intellectual appreciation of him dates from this period. I believe it is a fact—though I know how egotistic this remark will seem to some people—that our acquaintance was a real help to his intellectual development. Mentally his inferior in many ways, I could give him nothing save appreciative companionship, but this happened to be the very thing he needed. There are some natures which can only develop fully when brought into contact with sympathetic influences; and Pelican's growth had been warped and stunted, though it could not be finally arrested, by the society into which his circumstances had thrown him. The individuals in that society, almost to a man, regarded him with either suspicion or contempt; and all his tendencies to exaggeration in sentiment were unduly aggravated. When he met with any one who would listen to him without either horror or disdain, his best self for the first time got a little space into which to breathe and grow. Very early in our acquaintance he spoke with his usual

impulsiveness of our first meeting as an era in his life. "Before that day," said he, "I had only dreamed of friendship, but *then* the dream came true. You know the circle in which I lived. There was B——, who could think and talk of nothing but cotton, and the fortune he is going to make out of it. Then there was D——, who believed he was called to spend all his time in saving people from hell; and who thought it carnal to read anything but tracts, of which it is speaking charitably to call them nothing worse than worthless. The rest were all of the same order. What had I in common with such men? I don't want to make a fortune; and I would rather not save people from hell until I can make them fit for somewhere else."

These sentences are a fair specimen of the kind of talk by which Pelican gained for himself his unsavoury reputation; and if he were sometimes misapprehended and therefore shunned, perhaps the blame cannot be altogether laid on the shoulders of his friends. Having quoted this utterance, I must in mere justice to him also quote a passage from one of his letters in which one of the above startling ideas appears in an expanded, and therefore more intelligible and reasonable form. "I am glad," he writes, "that you have told me of your conversation with M——, for I have no wish to be misjudged by any, least of all by men like him. He is like Mr. Disraeli, 'on the side of the angels,' and I would that he could recognise me as in some sort a fellow-

soldier. M——, you say, proclaims aloud that I do not believe in hell; and argues that disbelief in a punishing God strikes at the root of all morality. This may be so, nay, *is* so; and, for the very reason that it is so, such disbelief is to me for ever impossible. I do and must believe that there is a hell; may I not say I *know* there is a hell, because I know of the existence of God and of sin. So long as God and sin co-exist there must be conflict between them; and the sinner who will not separate himself from his sin must sooner or later feel the terror of the wrath of God which is directed against it. In this world the wrong-doer is often happy in his wrong-doing; he flourishes, as David said, like the green bay-tree; and of this terror he knows little or nothing. But when this universe of sense grows dim to him, and its illusions pass away; when he is brought face to face with eternal realities; there is then no escape from the consciousness of Divine indignation; and the outer darkness, in which he has been dwelling all the while, becomes a darkness which may be felt. To him this is hell—the infinite horror—horrible because painful; but it is really only the result of the conflict of a holy love with the sin which has so enslaved him that it has become a part of himself. If we believe in God—the only possible God—a personal union of Infinite power and Infinite holiness—can we doubt how such a conflict will end? He must reign until every enemy shall be put under His feet. The last enemy that

shall be destroyed is death ; the last, because the mightiest. But even he, mighty as he is, *shall be* destroyed ; and for every soul that the Father has made and the Son has redeemed, there shall be life for evermore,—life, not mere existence, but that divine state to which Christ calls us ; that salvation which He lived and died that we might receive ; that blessedness which God is so anxious to secure for us that He never lets us go, but of His infinite mercy leads us even through hell to His own home, to lie upon His heart, weary with wandering, but satisfied at last. God is love, and God is changeless ; the man whom God has once loved He loves for ever. God's love triumphant has made heaven, and it is the same love in conflict with evil that has made hell. But we know—do we not?—that a day must come when conflict will end in victory ; when sin will be no more, because God is all in all ; and when death and hell, their terrible and glorious mission at last accomplished, will be together cast into the lake of fire. These things are to me not opinions—they are convictions ; they are part of myself. If I were to abandon them, religion would be impossible to me. I must believe in sin, and therefore in hell ; but most of all must I believe in a God who is stronger than they."

Such was Pelican's letter ; passionate enough, as were all his utterances concerning those matters on which—to use his own phraseology—he had no opinions, but only convictions, and yet displaying a certain logical

grip which prevented his passion from wasting itself in aimless beating of the air. As I said, I was in justice bound to quote it with all its heterodoxy ; but, indeed, expositions of the current orthodoxies find so little place in any of Pelican's effusions, that they may be said, with little exaggeration, to be altogether absent. On this question of the final triumph of God the reader is likely, nay, almost certain, to hear something more before reaching the end of this volume.

During the second winter of our acquaintance I began to make a sort of Boswell of myself, and took numberless notes of Pelican's talk, mostly of the more moderate and reasonable portion of it, which consisted in the utterance of that calm and meditative side of his nature which was only visible to those who knew him best. Until very lately I had no reason to believe that all these notes were not in existence ; but on looking among a heap of papers where I expected to find them, only a few fragments reward my search. These are for the most part records of isolated remarks, the connection and application of which probably give them the greater part of their value ; but as these are unfortunately forgotten, the reader must lose such help as they would give. I shall print them word for word as I find them written in these old note-books of mine, to produce such effect as they may, merely adding in particulars any words of explanation, modification, or protest that may seem absolutely necessary. Here they are ; the reader must make the best of them.

I find that a man's originality is a thing of which I have subjective evidence, and I dare say your experience is the same as my own. You talk with some men, and you come away more learned but not more wise. You have appropriated intellectual food, but no assimilating process has been at work, and the most probable consequence is a bad attack of mental indigestion. It strikes me there must always be a want of original thought in conversation which awakens no thought in yourself. However well-informed a man may be whose conversation is not stimulating to your own mind, depend upon it he is one whose ideas run in a well-worn groove, and impinge upon no other ideas in their passage outwards. An original man is one who, for the time, makes you original also. You do not so much listen to the expression of his thoughts, as think for yourself. This is always my experience when I manage to secure an hour or two with L—— : I find myself thinking with a rapidity and clearness that are surprising, and every moment ideas which are to me quite new, arise in my mind; in fact, so long as our talk lasts, I am as much a genius as he is, and feel quite a veneration for myself. His mind is a magnet, and makes all other minds magnetic by friction; but the misfortune is, that when the friction stops the magnetism departs, and the poor fellow who has been a genius for five-and-twenty minutes, relapses into commonplace stupidity for the next three months.

Affection has a curious multiplying, or perhaps I ought to say, enlarging, power. The moment you begin to love another, you have a double existence; you live in him and share his life. This is the one idea which helps me to realize the omnipresence of God. He loves everything He has made and lives in it; a doctrine which appears much more human than the notion of a mere mechanical extension of His being through space, which may be, and doubtless is, true enough; but which doesn't seem of much import to us. I have not many hard words or aggressive sceptics; but it is difficult to forgive them for having compelled Christians who have taken up their gauntlet to write natural theologies which make God the result of a logical process instead of a living Spirit.

There is undoubtedly a great deal of religious profession now-a-days that is very worthless; but this fact does not prove, as some people think it does, that religion is getting the worst of it. For if it be true that hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue, then the fact that insincere religion is so common, shows, not that true piety is losing power, but that it is gaining it.

(This is a specimen of the paradoxes in which Pelican loved to indulge. Like most paradoxes, it has *something* in it: how much is hard to say. For

my own part I am inclined to deem it questionable ; but there are very obvious arguments on both sides.)

I believe that colour-blindness is one of the commonest physical defects. I was reading, the other day, that out of a number of persons, of all ages and professions, who had been examined by Dr. George Wilson of Edinburgh, one in every seventeen was found to be suffering under some form of it. A sort of mental or spiritual colour-blindness is even more prevalent. Just as some men are incapable of perceiving green, so other men are incapable of perceiving certain aspects of nature, or truth, or morals. You know the old anecdote of the man who, when he saw for the first time the falls of Niagara, exclaimed, "What a number of mills that would drive." That man was afflicted with moral colour-blindness ; everything was to him yellow and white, like the gold and silver in his cash-box. Just as the word *blue* is meaningless to the man who cannot distinguish between a turquoise and a pearl, so the word *sublime* is meaningless to a man of this order. He admits that there may be sublimity in the world ; if he be honest, he says, I cannot deny it, for I do not understand what the word means ; and until an idea assumes a form which is comprehensible to me, it is folly in me to pronounce any opinion upon it. You may say, "The falls of Niagara are sublime ;"

and I reply, "Perhaps they are." You may say again, "The hills of Nagara are formidable;" and again I reply, "Perhaps they are." But neither of your assertions presents to me any intelligible idea which I either affirm or deny. Say, "The hills of Nagara are a ten thousand horse-power," and I can understand that assertion, and am ready to discuss it.

and I know each other pretty well ; but how absurd my impressions of you, and yours of me, would seem if we could only for one minute look out of undeceiving eyes, and see each other truly for once. It is a half-ludicrous, half-terrible thought, but I suppose it is true, that neither of us ever saw anything as it really is. I wonder whether we shall when we get to heaven. I dare say not wholly, for we shall carry the self, the *ego*, with us there ; and the *non ego* will be still a half-known mystery. With the alteration of a single word, Shelley's grand lines are even more unalterably true :—

“ *Self*, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity.”

There are some men whose love of truth is æsthetic, not moral. It is a matter of taste with them ; and as such there are necessities to which it must bow. But there are others with whom the love of truth is a passion, the gratification of which is itself the one final necessity ; and all other claims, howsoever necessary they may seem, must bow and sink even below the rank of expedencies the moment they set themselves in opposition to it.

I think almost every one must have noticed, and those who have not noticed must have felt unconsciously, how much easier it is to bear scolding or

harsh criticism of any kind from those who have not a right to inflict it upon us, than from those who have. I suppose the reason of this is, that we on our side feel we have a right to resent such criticism if we choose; but if we do not so choose, we have the pleasant consciousness that we are exercising a praiseworthy condescension in receiving it graciously.

You will have heard that the Methodists are trying to get up what they call a revival in their new chapel. There was a meeting last night in the large school-room, and I was there. I don't know whether I was revived, but I was a good deal astonished, for it was in some ways the most curious scene I have ever beheld. It proved one thing to me most effectually, that we have not yet reached the dead uniform level of which John Stuart Mill is so much afraid; for there was enough eccentricity and defiance of conventionality to satisfy the soul of the boldest intellectual rebel. The man who spoke actually conducted a dramatic entertainment, having for its subject—you will hardly believe it, but it is true—the agony of Christ in Gethsemane. His transformations from one character to another were as sudden and complete as those of Mr. Howard Paul. I feel ashamed even to talk of such awful profanity, but perhaps telling you about it will get it out of my head. The wretch absolutely dared to kneel down, holding a glass of

water in his hand, and to use those words in which our Lord prayed that the cup might be taken away. Then he jumped up, assumed the character of Judas, and flung his arms round the neck of one of the gentlemen on the platform to represent the traitor's kiss. I can stand a good deal, but you will easily believe I felt myself going cold with horror. After the outrageous, dare-devil blasphemy of some religious people, I must say that the blasphemy of the irreligious seems to me too weak and wishy-washy to be worth mentioning. And yet there were some really good people there who seemed to enjoy it. From what I see of the religious world, I am more and more convinced that the man who goes out of his way in search of rapturous and exciting devotional experiences, is not the man whose spiritual sensibilities are most acute. On the contrary, it is because they are so obtuse and lethargic that he finds it necessary to resort to extraordinary methods of arousing them. This fact, when fairly stated, seems almost too self-evident to need assertion; but if we remembered it constantly, it would alter many of our estimates of religious character.

(Those who are acquainted with the phenomena of revivals will read the foregoing account without much astonishment; but to many readers it will seem simply incredible. I can, however, pledge my word for its truthfulness. The performance of the revivalist gave

rise to a brief but rather animated controversy in one of the local newspapers; and the awful parody of the most sacred scene in the world's history found a number of angry, but undoubtedly pious, defenders.)

A man who possesses a belief often does very little with it; but when a belief possesses a man we may expect miracles.

One of the evils necessarily attendant upon mock modesty is, that it issues to end in very real anger. We rate ourselves at a low figure, and then are enraged with people who estimate us at our own published price: a proceeding which is at once foolish and unjust. Whenever B—— reads an essay at the society, he always begins with a long proem of self-depreciation; which is only given that you may contradict it. If you assent to it—and it is generally the only thing in the whole paper to which you can assent—his fury knows no bounds.

What a very foolish waste of power it is to begin any conflict in which you see you must be beaten. This seems very obvious; but it has struck me two or three times lately with all the force of novelty, and I am sure very few people put into practice the principle involved. I know I am myself an atrocious sinner in this respect. I profess to hate argument, and yet I am always trying

to convince people who are, beyond all doubt, from some cause not open to conviction. They are either so fully committed to a definite theory or course of action that no retreat is possible, or their nature is in such a condition or stage of development as to be insensitive to the force of a certain kind of argument. In matters of practice, the remembrance of this rule of life is even more necessary than in matters of speculation. I am full of remorse when I think how often I have spoiled my temper by absurd failures in attacking strongholds which I ought to have known were, for the time at least, impregnable.

We talk of character as that which lies deepest in a man ; but there is really something deeper still, and that is the man's self—his original inborn nature. Character is, after all, a semi-external thing. Say that a man is generous : he is lavish not only of gifts but of services, and all his giving flows from benevolence and not from ostentation. This is his character ; but how little you know of a man if you only know that he is generous. How little you know even of his very generosity ; for experience teaches us all that no quality is the same thing in two different people, though each may possess it to the full. There is a generosity that wounds, and a generosity that heals ; a generosity that draws you to a man and makes you long to be a recipient again for the mere pleasure of taking something from his hand ; and a

generosity which drives you away, feeling that you would rather die than have another gift forced upon you. What makes the difference? It is not that one man is really generous and the other only pretending to be so; or that the generosity is complete in one and partial in the other. Such solutions are only stupid cuttings of the knot. The difference is between the self of the one and the self of the other. The one *is* a beautiful *nature*, and, if he were a criminal, there would be a certain grace even about his crimes. He would give a charm to burglary and make pocket-picking poetical. The other only *has* a beautiful *quality* which, like a plant growing in an unfavourable situation, is stunted and distorted by the poverty of the soil and the want of vitalization in the air.

When necessity compels us to undertake work which we dislike, there is a loss of power; and it is well to economize force, not by endeavouring to overcome the dislike, which may be a reasonable and wise one, but by resolving to keep it in the back-ground of the mind.

Forms as well as styles of art pass away. The age of epics and cathedrals is gone, and as life becomes more complex its restoration becomes less possible. The characteristics of great works of art are diffused among a number of smaller ones; for in art, as in everything else, there is a division of labour. The question whether this

is an advantage or the reverse is not so easy to answer as some people suppose. I could compose a very long brief for an advocate on either side, and I could not bet with any degree of certainty on the verdict of the jury. For this, as for every other loss, there is some compensation. As Tennyson says, "the individual withers," but "the world is more and more;" which, put into other words, means that though we have no giants in these days, the average stature is higher than it was. I suppose this is true, though George Dawson didn't seem to believe it.

(Many of these extracts from Pelican's conversations belong to a period much later than that referred to in the beginning of this chapter, but are gathered together here for the sake of unity and convenience. He speaks here of a lecture by Mr. Dawson on the subject of "Old Books," some account of which will be found on another page of this volume. The passage alluded to is evidently the following :—"I go to old books to get wisdom ; I go to new ones to get knowledge. Many a knowing man is very foolish ; many an ignorant man is very wise. We know more than people knew in the old days, but I doubt very much if we are wiser than they were. There may be more wise men in the world now, because there are more men of all kinds ;—and the *proportion of fools is rather fixed.*")

Our bitterest quarrels are with those whose natures

are very similar to our own: and I think the reason of this must be that the fact of their having so much in common with us leads us to expect a *prima facie* agreement with ourselves and we are disappointed if we do not get it. Their primary motives are the same as ours: and therefore we feel as if we had just more for indignation at their differing and unexpected conclusions. We can afford to be more tolerant to those who move in an entirely different plane from that which we occupy, for we know that with them we can never come into real *contact*.

Commonplace moralists say a great deal about the difficulty of *keeping resolutions*, but it seems to me that the really difficult thing is to *make* them. When a resolution is once really made, the keeping of it is a comparatively easy thing. The reason why this sounds paradoxical is that we often give the name of resolution to a mental process which falls short of an entire commitment of our whole nature to a certain course of action. When a resolution is made we must burn our boats: we must not even leave a raft by which to escape from the task we have set before us. This is the thing which is difficult to do: but when it has been done, who does not see that it is easier to go on than to turn back?

A man's noblest utterance, provided it be sincere, is always an index of the height his nature has attained.

Our speech is our life made audible ; and we must have lived up to our highest expression, though, perhaps, only for a moment.

There is a wonderful amount of truth in that verse of Adelaide Anne Procter's :—


“ Dwells within the soul of every artist
More than all his effort can express ;
And he knows his best remains unuttered,
Sighing at what we call his success ; ”

and what she says is true, in its measure, not only of the artistic class, but of every one who thinks and feels. We all have thoughts and feelings which are poetry in solution ; and it is only because we are unable to precipitate or crystallize them that we are not all poets at times. I suppose there are at this moment thousands of unwritten poems drifting through the universe of mind waiting for some poet to give them substance and shape. They are like souls wandering, homeless and despairing, in search of fitting bodies to inhabit. Sometimes we feel that they are near us, we can almost grasp them ; but we cannot give them what they seek, and so they flit away, and we see them no more.

(The definition which follows was given after one of the meetings of the Literary Society, at which an essay on Liberalism had been read by an ardent radical and political dissenter, who had of course identified Liberal-

ism with police legislation, secular education, non-intervention, vote by ballot, and all the other dogmas of the party to which he belonged. Pelican had not joined in the animated discussion which followed, and I had attributed his silence to indifference; for he had often remarked that political debates never produced anything but third-rate leading articles, and that if he must have his mind burdened with such dreary compositions he would rather read first-rate specimens at home. The subject of the evening had however been occupying his thoughts to a much greater extent than I had supposed; and as soon as we had gained the solitude of my room, and settled ourselves comfortably before the fire, he gave me the benefit of his reflections.)

Robinson's paper was clever, as every one expected it to be, but it was preternaturally dull,—and the dulness was really malicious, for there are scores of interesting things that might have been said about Liberalism. For instance, he might easily have shown that Liberalism and Conservatism are generally matters of race, and that as such they affect a man's entire mental constitution. Whigs and Tories, like poets, are born, not made; and if a man be liberal or conservative on one point only, it is almost certain to be simply accidental. Or he might have given us an account of the popular definitions of Liberalism, and an estimate of their value; but he had no inclination for that kind of thing. It is so much easier to talk than it is to know exactly what you are



talking about : so much more delightful to crow over the exploits of the Liberal party than it is to set one's self to find out what Liberalism means. You know it is generally said that Liberalism springs from a feeling of the necessity of liberty ; Conservatism from a feeling of the necessity of order. I think, however, that a more thorough examination would show that Liberalism is the necessary result of the preponderance of the idea of individuality ; Conservatism of a like preponderance of the idea of community. The social analyst who sees men as separate units, is naturally a Liberal ; the synthesist, who thinks not of men but of a society, is as naturally a Conservative. The love of liberty or of order is a necessary consequence of one of these primary and instinctive habits of mind. Liberty is prized because it is seen to be necessary to the full development of the individual ; order is venerated because it is essential to the stability of the community. It seems to follow from this that a man's opinion on any party question, so called, gives no clue to his true position. Take, for example, the question of the extension of the franchise. The measures for obtaining it were supposed to be the exclusive possession of the Liberal party ; but it was quite possible to support them with either Liberal or Conservative buttresses. Those who were in favour of the enfranchisement of the working-man *for the sake of the working-man*—because they thought he had a right to a vote, and that it would do him good by providing

him with political education—were Liberals, not only in party but in fact; while those who supported enfranchisement because it tended to do away with an anomaly, or to perfect the system of representative government, or to introduce improvements in legislation—in short, those who supported it for the sake of the community—were acting on principles really conservative.

(I find among Pelican's scattered notes a paragraph which seems so naturally to follow the foregoing sentences that I give it a place here. From its form I think it must have been intended to be the germ of an essay on civilization, a subject in which he was always interested.)

Two things are essential to a perfect civilization. One of these is a government of such character and strength that it shall be both anxious and able to foster the development—physical, mental, and moral—of every individual citizen. The other is the converse of this:—a mass of individual citizens of such perfection of nature that the government—whose members come out from the people—shall be made clear-sighted and strong enough to have in it all the elements of continuous and increasing vitality. In the words of Guizot, "civilization consists of the progress of society and the progress of the individual." The first of these is attained through law; the second through liberty. But it must be remembered that both law and liberty are but means, having progress for an end; and it must also be remembered that they are unsusceptible of separation,—all true law being a

law of liberty ; all true liberty being bounded and defined by law. In the consideration of this subject a man's natural tendencies are singularly apt to lead him astray. One who feels deeply the evil of anarchy, is likely to feel that a strong government is in itself a good thing, whatever be the nature of its rule ; while, on the other hand, one who has suffered, or seen others suffer, under an iron despotism, will be tempted to believe that in a country where every man does what is right in his own eyes, the millennium must be at hand. Mr. Carlyle, with all his wonderful clearness of insight, has a tendency to the first of these errors : the average modern Englishman is deeply infected with the second.

Whenever you come across any criticism that is mainly characterised by smartness, you may be certain it is false. So far as my experience has gone, this is a rule without any exceptions. The man who aims at writing a clever article never gets outside himself ; and until he does this, true criticism is impossible to him. As Mr. Tupper would say, the blossom of smartness grows upon the poison-plant of egotism, and falsehood is the deadly fruit thereof.

Impartiality is doubtless at times a very valuable quality ; but in any discussion on moral questions the only impartial people are those who are wholly indifferent, and instead of being the best judges, they are the worst.

The fact of their indifference is an indication of deficient sensitiveness to the special truth to be arrived at; and while that deficiency remains, the truth can never be fully apprehended by them.

Some people laugh at my habit of pencil-marking my books; but I have found the practice wonderfully helpful, and I would advise you to adopt it. It was suggested to me by Todd's "Student's Manual," which I read when I was a boy; and which, if I remember rightly, was conventional and rubbishy; but I always think of it kindly on account of its pencil-marking scheme. Todd suggested a series of simple signs—crosses, circles, lines single and double, and the like—to represent different kinds of comment and criticism. One mark indicated obscurity; another, novelty; another, sophistical reasoning; another, insufficient development of an idea; and so on. I did not adopt Todd's system in detail, but constructed a system for myself which works splendidly. You have no idea how amusing it is to read again a book I read five years ago, and to notice the marks which my wisdom at that period suggested. The passage which long ago seemed full of inspiration is now nothing but high sounding commonplace: the sentence which was once obscure and meaningless is to-day full of light and life. My marginal hieroglyphs are like the pencillings with which some children deface the walls of rooms to indicate their height. They both become

registers of growth ; and I am able to gauge my mental advance by the thoughts which I have left behind me. Perhaps I ought rather to say, the thoughts that I have absorbed and assimilated, for they have doubtless helped me to reach a level higher than their own.

The love of system is a very fascinating, but a very dangerous passion. The man who invents a system which settles everything, always leaves the greatest amount of re-settling to be done by those who come after him.

What a pity it is that so much of our conversation is polemical. I am always discussing something, and yet I feel more intensely every day that discussion is useless. Truth is, as Mr. Matthew Arnold says, "a thing to be seen," not to be proved. It is a beautiful figure which stands by us always ; but only when our minds are prepared for the vision, are our eyes opened to perceive it. The arguments we use to convince others, are not the arguments by which we ourselves have been convinced : indeed, no man is ever convinced by argument, but always by revelation. When we are fit for the truth it *comes* to us, and until then there is a sense in which we are better without it, because we should only transform it into falsehood.

So end my notes of Pelican's talk. I can form no

estimate of the intrinsic value of these fragments, for to me every sentence floats in an atmosphere of undying associations and incommunicable memories. There may be readers to whom some thought here written may bring a revelation like that of which Pelican spoke: if there be one such I shall be content.

This has been a chapter of prose: it shall finish with a poem. Pelican has ceased talking for awhile; and now he shall sing. It will be welcome as a change, even though the music be in a minor key.

“THE YEARS TAKE ALL.”

“The years take all and leave us nought;”
So says the song I sing to-day:
This is the lesson time has taught
To me—to thousands passed away.

The years take all! The wild delight
Of that young day when first the earth
Reveals her beauty to our sight
With rapture like a second birth;—

When round our head the airs of heaven
Seem to play softly, and our eyes
Gaze on the glories God has given,
As Adam gazed in paradise;—

The exultation of the hour
When battles fought at last are won;
When in our souls we feel that power
Is born: that a great deed is done;—

All boyhood's dreams, all hopes of youth,
So quick to rise, so slow to fall;
How sad the inevitable truth,—
The years take all! The years take all!

Yet is it true, this strange sad thought,—
When youth has gone doth nothing stay?
Have I not memories that are fraught
With benediction for to-day?

If in my breast I feel no more
The ancient ardour for the fight,
Still I am not without a store
Of trophies brave—a goodly sight.

What life has given I have and hold;
Time ne'er can call me to resign
Her treasures rich and manifold:
They are myself—the years are mine.

So I no more my voice will lend
To the sad song that I have sung;
For though some raptures have an end,
The purest joys are ever young.

And though the things most prized depart
Beyond the reach of love's recall,
Love's self lives on: the loving heart
Can never say, "The years take all!"

VI.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

I SUPPOSE every one who writes a book of any kind, particularly a book which attempts anything like portraiture of persons, or places, or things, stops sometimes in the course of it to ask himself whether the picture in the mind of the reader bears any vital resemblance to that one which he himself sees hung in the gallery of memory, and which he feels he can never fully reproduce. I too ask, but I fail, as in such circumstances man must always fail, to find an answer; and I can have no idea as to whether the Paul Pelican whom the reader sees in these pages is the same Paul Pelican that I see while I write them. And so I ask another question which is more practical, and, I think, more easily answerable. What is the best method of making one man known to another? in other words, What are the things which, when told of a man, do most to strike into the mind of a stranger the very image of himself? I really think that we can learn more from a good painted portrait of him than from a folio volume about him; I verily believe that the soul of a man does somehow get into his face in a way that it gets nowhere else; but suppose we can neither see the face nor a veritable reproduction of it; suppose

we have to content ourselves with a folio, or even with an octavo volume,—what record there will tell us most? It will never be the record of what happened to him; it will seldom be the record of what he did, or even of what he said or thought. There is something to be learned from all these, as there is also from the record of how he appeared to others, and how they were influenced by him; but the man's self is most nearly apprehended by us when we open the pages that tell us of the things towards which he turned and from which he shrank, the objects of his likes and dislikes, his loves and hatreds. Give me the loves, and I will give you the man.

The previous pages have not perhaps been quite devoid of indications such as are here referred to, but they are scattered up and down in a somewhat aimless and unsystematic manner; and I cannot be certain that a definite human figure of unmistakable individuality does indeed stand out from this poor canvas of mine. Of one thing I may be certain, that if, in the end, this be not the case, the picture will be worth nothing, howsoever many clever tricks of drawing or colouring it may disclose; while if the portrait be really recognisable and comprehensible, a little crudeness here and there cannot take away the value which always attaches to the living reproduction of a living man.

Is the old maxim true which implies that we must judge

a man by his friends? I think it is—absolutely true. We may fairly judge a man either by his friends or by his enemies, best by both; but then it must be remembered that comparatively few of our friends are human beings. Of human friends a man may be quite bereft; but he has birds, beasts, and fishes, rivers and mountains, books, thoughts, amusements, and great interests; not to mention the celebrated three of Coleridge,—

“Himself, his Maker, and the angel Death.”

And so, when you assume to judge a man by his friends, he has a right to demand that these shall not be forgotten, and to contest your claim to found an estimate on the half-dozen men and women who revolve round him, or around whom he revolves. Of course the human friends will always head the catalogue, and in many cases you may begin and end with them, without much fear of your judgment being marred by the omission of the rest. The only thing you are in danger of mistaking, is the essential nature of the bond of union; for if you fail to get hold of the real uniting link, you are certain to be thrown hopelessly wrong. I once knew a man whom I will call A——, who, much to his disgust, acquired the reputation of being an unbeliever in orthodox Christianity, from his known fondness for the society of B——, who was a confirmed doubter; while in reality the uniting links were a mutual respect for

each other's character, and a common interest in the science of entomology. In the long run, if I remember rightly, the friendship was dissolved by causes arising out of this very fact of B——'s thorough scepticism.

Pelican suffered a little from injustice which took the same form, though only from a few very silly people; for those of his acquaintances who used their minds, even to the slightest extent, could not fail to see that the man who had at one time four associates, one of whom was a Churchman, another a Quaker, a third a Comtist, and a fourth a Roman Catholic, could hardly with fairness be accused in any one case of making opinion the basis of preference.

I can only think of one word which can properly be used to characterise Pelican's friends *as a body*; but it is a word which implies much. They were all tolerably moral and tolerably intelligent; but so are the majority of persons in decent society. Some of them were not remarkable for either piety, intellect, amiability, manners, or wealth. What then was the subtle attraction which drew Pelican to them. It was this. Whatever they lacked, whatever positive faults you might be able justly to charge them with, however objectionable they might seem in various ways, you nevertheless could not, if you were candid, refrain from admitting that they were *interesting*.

This is, perhaps, a vague word, but I cannot find a more definite one which will answer my purpose equally

well. And it is not so vague after all. What is it that is really interesting to us? Is it not the new, the unexplored, the half-comprehended, which strikes and fascinates, while the known, the old, the understood, are contemplated with an indifference which threatens ere long to take them into the region of the unknown again? And so by an interesting man we mean one in whom the familiar elements of human nature are mingled in such unfamiliar proportions that we hardly know them as the same, and are able, in virtue of their combinations, to discover in them altogether unsuspected properties and powers.

Individuality was one of Pelican's idols; and the man who startled his neighbours by some outrageous nonconformity of nature, which drove him like a leper from their doors, was always sure of welcome and sanctuary at Pelican's lodge in the wilderness. It must, however, be a real nonconformity of nature; any other nonconformity than that he scouted and despised. "When God makes a nonconformist," he would say, "he makes at once a missionary and a martyr; but these impostors, who pretend to be different from other people, want the palm of the mission without the fire of the martyrdom, and ought, in my opinion, to have the fire without the palm." He always maintained that an individuality which God had made angular had some message for the world which the regulation curves could never express, but which only angles could reveal; and that the duty of society towards

such an individual, no less than its duty to itself, was to preserve the points and ridges smooth and straight. In the first verse of a poem, the remainder of which I have forgotten, he wrote,—

“To thine own self be true, because
Thou canst not be as other men;
The moulds God makes He straightway breaks,
And useth not the same again.”


The people who bore the most obvious marks of having come from the broken moulds, were by Pelican drawn to his heart, and treasured as, in some sort, the mediums of new revelations.

Some of those who knew him best could never be brought to understand his conduct in this respect. Pelican was himself a gentleman, but the idea of confining his friendships to men of his own caste never once occurred to him; and when presented to him, as it sometimes was, he cast it behind his back as an incomprehensible absurdity. “What does Mrs. So-and-so mean?” he would inquire, wonderingly, “by asking how I can make a friend of Robinson, who is not a gentleman. She might as well ask me how I can associate so intimately with Morris, who has such a terrible squint. One is almost as purely physical a matter as the other. I can think of no better illustration of the man who is a gentleman and the man who is not, than the difference between a race-horse and a cart-horse. The race-horse is pleasanter to look at; but the cart-horse may be the more

measured animal, and is certainly the more useful one. I put the matter in this way to the good lady, only the other day, and she would have it that it was one of my abhorred individual crotchets, until I produced a passage from ~~Kant~~ whom she professes to admire immensely—in which he says exactly the same thing. She could reply nothing to this, except that there was no making me out, which is probably a very true statement of the case from her point of view."

And yet, in spite of this, Pelican prized beyond all measure a quality which is almost inseparable from gentle breeding—a quality which he himself possessed to the full—the quick and broad sympathy which comes of a nature tremblingly alive at every point of its surface. Much as he loved to see a strong, clearly outlined individuality, he was always repelled by the spectacle of such a nature drawing hard and fast lines of thought and feeling, beyond which its sympathies refused to stray; and it was a favourite thought of his, that the main advantage of being lifted in any way out of the crowd of ordinary men, is the capacity thus conferred to understand such men better even than they can understand themselves, and thus to interpret them to themselves by the power of a penetrative sympathy.

I have already said that Pelican, when we first met, had no one whom he could really call a friend; but during the few years of our acquaintance he gathered around him a small but very pleasant circle. Two of his



most intimate associates were medical men. He used to say that he thought doctors knew less about people's bodies and more about their minds than the members of any other profession or calling ; and that if a doctor was worth anything at all, one good dose of his talk was worth a hundred doses of his medicine. Perhaps his belief in this heresy accounted for the fact that both his medical friends were homœopathists, and were therefore not likely to offer him anything more formidable than a pilule of sugar of milk, which had once in its history been brought into temporary contact with a weak solution of some polysyllabic drug.

Mr. Brownlow and Dr. Wade were both remarkable men in their way. Brownlow was a man who might be thirty or might be forty years of age, the precise number being an unsolved problem ; while Dr. Wade had manifestly left his sixtieth birthday behind him. They were wonderfully different, but they had two or three characteristics in common. They were both thinkers, both copious and very slow talkers, and both ardent lovers of poetry. Brownlow had the horizontal, and Wade the perpendicular, mind. The former was a short man, nearly bald, with a face of Napoleonic type, though not of the Napoleonic complexion, and two small keen eyes, which peered from behind the ambush of a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles, and looked as if they saw everything and revealed nothing. Altogether, he was a man from whom you would expect to receive a good deal of the dry light of science, but

little else ; and in whom you would be surprised to find a subtle critic of the delicacies of literature and art ; a genial philosopher, interested in the most diverse manifestations of humanity ; and a story-teller who could light up the very dullest narrative with flashes of the driest, brightest humour. These things constituted his charm, which was appreciable by all who knew him. The secret of his value in Pelican's eyes was what might be called the *fluidity* of his mind : its power of penetrating into other minds, and for the moment becoming one with them, and seeing through their eyes. He was very fond of that great maxim of Joubert's : " One should be fearful of being wrong in poetry when one thinks differently from the poets, and in religion when one thinks differently from the saints ; " and he never fell into the mistake of making judgments in one region of thought upon *data* derived from another. He was not a man who would be called " religious," but he paid the very highest tribute in his power to what is ordinarily known as " religious experience," by assigning to it a real scientific value, and maintaining that in the world of pure religion, the evidence of the spiritual man was equal in value to the evidence of the practical experimentalist in the world of science. " Spirit and matter," he said once, " are both real ; but you have to assume both at the beginning, for the man who only assumes one never gets beyond it to the other. I see no prospect of a reconciliation between the men of piety and the men of science,

and yet both are right, though only half-right. I suppose both are needed, for the secret of power is concentration: you must see only one thing. The typical man of business, for example, cannot trouble himself about moral beauty; his eye is fixed on cash—on success. He inquires concerning this or that transaction, not, 'Is it right?' but, 'Can it be done?' and he does it; concerning this man, 'Can *he* be done?' and he does *him!*"

Dr. Wade was a much less complex character than Mr. Brownlow. He was a poet, and had all the guilelessness and simplicity popularly supposed to belong to the poetic character, but so seldom really found there. I have not known many poets myself, for I never had any money to lend; but I do not generally find that the knack of stringing together a few pretty verses is at all indicative either of a want of ability to count the number of shillings in a pound, or of any willingness to receive nineteen instead of twenty. Dr. Wade was, however, a complete realization of the popular poetic ideal. His life was, on the whole, a happy one; but his commercial friends considered it one long failure. One of them pathetically remarked that it cut him to the heart to see a man with every kind of sense but common sense. Pelican, who, on the contrary, hated common sense, which he called the materialism of the mob, loved Dr. Wade mainly because he had not a particle of it in his whole composition. Patients might come, and patients might go; but the doctor, far away in the land of dreams,

where he loved to wander, sat in his dingy little consulting room, writing verses about the spiritual meaning of nature, or delivering with slow eloquence to Pelican, or some equally congenial listener, a Coleridgean monologue, composed of about equal parts of Swedenborg, Wordsworth, and George Fox, with a strong flavour of Dr. Wade himself permeating the whole. He was a natural nomad. He seemed to fly from success as eagerly as other men pursue it; and as soon as he had made a good practice at Brookfield, his wandering mania seized him, and he left it and us behind him.

Hume said of Berkeley's philosophy that it admitted of no refutation, and produced no conviction. Pelican had one friend for whom this celebrated *dictum* was not true. Berkeleyanism was to him not merely the only reasonable, but the only conceivable, theory of the universe. Ideas were to him the only existences; the visions of other people were his realities. Arthur Wariner was one of those transcendentalists who, as Emerson says, when they look at events see them as spirits.

"The outward shows of sky and earth
And hill and valley he had viewed;"

and they were to him but shows,—appearances dimly reflecting a living thought behind. To this young man—for he was but young in years though old in ripeness of thought and perfection of culture—Pelican clung with a grip even tighter than that of mere affection. The fact

was, I think (though on a matter like this one cannot speak with the certainty of personal knowledge), that in Arthur Warriner's society he felt he could escape from himself, or rather from a part of himself, that dragged him whither he would not go. He sometimes confessed that he had the mind of a materialistic sceptic; and it was only the presence of the mysterious something which we call the *Self*, the *Ego*, that kept the mind in check and prevented it from asserting a despotic authority over the man. Sometimes, however, the mind would, in spite of the self, make an effort to gain pre-eminence, or, as he expressed it, the Aristotle in him would rise against the Plato; and then he flew to his friend whose clear vision of the spiritual behind the phenomenal became his by sympathetic insight.

It was Arthur Warriner who introduced him to the works of a man who was then known only to a select few, but who is fast becoming recognised as the richest and truest of our modern English poets. Pelican's love for the mere music of verse at first hindered him from feeling towards Robert Browning all that Warriner felt; but he soon found out that there was real song, not less than teaching, in the man who had, for a time, seemed a mere embodiment of rugged force. Music? Yes; the true music of great poetic passion, as Pelican came to see in later days when dear Arthur Warriner had left us for ever, and I sat listening to him as he read the marvellous poem in which the dying wife speaks

to her husband of the consolations in poorer loves which she sadly foresees he will seek when she has departed. How well I remember the exultant energy with which he declaimed that nobly passionate verse which comes nearly at the close of the poem :—

“ Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt be :
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum,
Or lavish of the treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart’s place here I keep for thee.”

“ There !” he would exclaim, half defiantly, as if he expected me to assume the position of a hostile critic ; “ if Browning had never written anything but this one poem ; if he had never written anything but this one verse ; if he had written only the last half of it, he would have still shown himself a great poet, in virtue of being able to express adequately the one thing which so many have tried to express and failed so miserably—the divine persistence of a supreme love.”

I could write much more of these three friends and of others who one by one appeared above his horizon, and became more or less dear to him ; but were I to go on as I might, this chapter would grow out of all proportion. Of his foes there is very little to be said. There were many who, for various reasons, disliked him, and whom, because of their dislike he shunned ; but he was not a good hater. He was, like Mr. Boy-

thorn in "Bleak House," fond of the humorous effect of terms of extravagant opprobrium, and used often to startle strangers by the vigour of his denunciations ; but his friends, who were in the secret, laughed at the lamb who had learned to howl, and who rather enjoyed being mistaken for a wolf. Pelican effectually cured me of my belief in the old commonplace, that the man who is able to love intensely must be capable of equally forceful hate ; and the more I think of it, the more I wonder that so outrageous a libel on human nature should have obtained such universal credence. I think the objects of his greatest dislike were unimaginative people ; for he always classed imagination among the moral qualities, and loved to show how some of the most hateful characteristics of humanity—selfishness, bigotry, hardness, pretentiousness—generally owed their existence to the lack of it. "We do not speak of God's imagination," he said to me one day ; "but it is really our recognition of something in Him that answers to it, which gives us such a certainty that He cannot deal otherwise than fairly with us, and which impels us to feel that we would rather be judged by Him than by any being on earth. It is with exquisite truth that one of the writers of the New Testament classes among our glories, and not among our terrors, the coming into the presence of *God the Judge of all.*"

Of the silent book-friends which stood always near him it is not necessary to speak at great length. Pelican chose

them as he chose his living, moving associates ; and his constant favourites were the volumes in whose pages he could see human faces of quaint or solemn interest, or from whose words he could derive that effectual stimulation which only comes from vital contact with a mind of intenser humanity than one's own. He was in his later days strongly drawn to the writings of that suggestive author who calls himself Henry Holbeach and Matthew Browne, by the power which is there manifested of seeing things, not exactly *in vacuo*, but in an atmosphere from which the conventional elements have been withdrawn, and in which the personal ones alone remain. He always admired John Stuart Mill for his perfect sanity, his wide tolerance, his splendid intellectual grasp ; but his admiration never became heated until he read the celebrated passage which lost the philosopher his seat for Westminster, and which enabled Pelican to see a man where he had previously seen only a mind. He told me he could never quote it without a thrill of passionate sympathy, so keen as to be absolutely painful. From which, I think, perhaps as much is to be inferred as from any one statement I have made concerning him.

He was always attracted by books which, as he expressed it, showed the inside of people ; and accordingly Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" never lost its power of fascination. I think the reason of his distaste for Shakspeare, and indeed for all dramatic literature, might

be found in the fact that the drama—even Shakspeare's drama—enables us to *see* people rather than to *see into* them. He was also very fond of Mr. Henry Kingsley's "Ravenshoe;" a book of very different character, the unmistakable charm of which must be felt but cannot easily be defined. He read a great many novels, and extracted a good deal of amusement out of stories which I thought dreary to the point of unreadableness; but I never heard him speak enthusiastically of any but these two, with the exception, of course, of the marvellous books of George Eliot whom he considered the greatest intellect in the realm of pure literature. England had ever seen. I ought perhaps to except "Elsie Venner" and the "Guardian Angel" of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the Scotch tales of Mr. George Mac Donald; but he was interested in the former as statements of great problems, and in the latter as stores of spiritual teaching, rather than as novels pure and simple.

He had a tolerably universal taste in literature; for I remember one of his few shelves which supported side by side Maurice's "Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy," "The Complete Works of Artemus Ward," George Herbert's "Poems," "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," Mill "On Liberty," "The Biglow Papers," Blake's "Songs of Innocence," and "The Imitation of Christ." He was not however quite so catholic as Charles Lamb; for there were books which he confessed to *be* books,

and not mere library decorations, which he could not read. He broke down at the end of one page of "Hudibras," one chapter of Miss Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," one volume of Mr. Carlyle's "History of Frederick the Great." What will appear to some people worse than all—almost as bad as his non-appreciation of Shakspeare—is the fact that on more than one occasion he was heard to speak of the charming essayist of Gascony, as "that maundering Montaigne."

A few miscellaneous antipathies may be easily summed up. He hated, with a perfect hatred, hymn-tunes; books of travel; popular preachers; money-making; aggressive respectability; morning calls; Calvinism; the *Times*, and indeed all newspapers, with the exception of the *Spectator*, by which he swore; cruelty to animals; evening parties; and any tendency to attribute low motives, which he considered the surest note of a worthless nature. Lastly, he was roused to frenzy by the use of the word "sound," and such a phrase as "the truth" when applied to any special religious system; and by the word "impropriety," when used in any circumstances whatsoever.

Let me hope that this list of special enmities may prove suggestive, for with it this chapter comes to an end. In Pelican's own words, written not of himself, but of one whom he loved,—

"These were his friends, and these his foes,—
These after, those before him, ran;
Look first on these and then on those,
And then—why then you know the man."

VII.

SOCIETY UNDER WATER.

IN this narrative I am hardly making any attempt to preserve a chronological order; but I have the satisfaction of feeling that if such order be altogether absent it will not be missed. The *what* and the *how* are generally of more consequence than the *when*; and in these reminiscences the *when* is of no consequence at all. The date of Pelican's aqueous experiences, some particulars of which are to be recorded in this chapter, will be fixed with sufficient definiteness if the season of the year be given. It was the early spring. Pelican had been for some time really ill, with that most provoking form of illness which does not confine a man to his bed, but only renders him fit for nothing out of it. His health was always as unsettled as the weather, and his pathological barometer had pointed to "stormy" for a very unusual and unsatisfactory length of time. It was evident that something must be done, and accordingly, *was* done. What society and what experiences Pelican met with, in pursuing the experiment he was at last induced to make, are best described in his letters, and in a sketch which he wrote for a feeble provincial magazine long ago dead, buried, and forgotten. The sketch will serve as an introduction to the letters, and shall come first.

I may as well begin this record—writes Pelican—by saying that I hate water. I have against it an antipathy so strong that I think it must be constitutional. I can heartily say “Amen” to every sentence written by St. Francis of Assisi in his hymn of praise, except that one in which he speaks with fraternal affection of “our sister the water, which is pure and serviceable and clean.” I dislike it in its relation both to the sense of taste and the sense of touch; and can appreciate it only in a landscape, where its absence is as unendurable as its presence anywhere else. I have so often expressed my feelings on this matter that I believe many of my friends consider me the victim of a harmless monomania on the subject of the pure element; and I am continually compelled to listen to the very smallest of small jokes, whose point—if they have any—lies in some absurd manner of accounting for what is considered my extraordinary peculiarity. The latest theory was propounded the other evening by a would-be facetious acquaintance, who declared that I was a living proof of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, for it was evident that in some other life I had been a mad dog, whose madness was so virulent that even a passage from one state of being into another could not wholly eradicate its predominant symptom.

But we never know what is in store for us; and just as poverty gives us strange bedfellows, so illness

makes us acquainted with terrible remedies. There came a time when for months I felt increasingly out of sorts. I tried first one specific and then another without success. Draughts and dieting seemed alike useless : physicians were in vain. I was beginning to despair, when one of my friends, who was of course acquainted with my pet aversion, maliciously suggested a visit to a water-cure establishment as really the one thing needful for me. I need not say that I rejected the idea with unqualified contempt ; but it soon became evident that I was the victim of a well-organized conspiracy, the end and aim of which was to force me to carry out this inhuman suggestion. Whenever I met a friend in the street I was compelled to stand and listen to his praises of hydropathy ; my evening visitors, who became very numerous indeed, had all amazing stories to tell of its wonderful triumphs ; and every morning the postman brought me some book or pamphlet which described in eloquent and glowing language the delights of the aquatic curative process.

I cannot wish to linger over my animated but ineffectual resistance. The subject is naturally painful and humiliating. We have proverbial authority for the statement that the continual falling of very small quantities of water will wear away a stone ; and my resolution must have been composed of moral granite, or it could not have resisted for so long a time the constant dropping to which it was subjected. At last,

however, it was worn away; and the only matter to be decided was in which chamber of the watery inquisition I should undergo my martyrdom. This, I soon found, was a question not to be settled without an amount of worry and trouble to which I look back with horror. My friends, hitherto so united, split up into noisy factions. Some recommended Malvern, the metropolis of the water cure; others advised Matlock as at once more picturesque and progressive. A ponderously scientific acquaintance said that Dr. A—— was the only hydropathist in England in whom he had the slightest confidence; another acquaintance, even more ponderously scientific, made precisely the same remark concerning Dr. B——; a maiden aunt of evangelical sentiments implored me to go to Dr. C——'s, where, she assured me, my body and soul would be equally cared for; while three or four strong-minded ladies, and one not very strong-minded gentleman warned me with grave severity that I must never expect another day of health if I declined to put myself at once under the care of Mr. and Mrs. D——.

Here was a pleasant state of things for any one in my prostrate condition. I knew that in pleasing one friend, I must mortally offend twenty others; for I had learned from sad experience that, as a rule, the grossest insult you can offer to a man is the rejection of his unsolicited advice. When, however, I was in the deepest depth of my absurd, and yet most miserable,

perplexity, I received a note from a friend who resided in the once fashionable city of St. Austin's, informing me that a new establishment had been opened in a beautiful spot about six miles from his home, and as it did not profess to accommodate more than five-and-twenty patients, he thought it might suit me better than any of the larger and more celebrated institutions. The information was most welcome, as it supplied me with a pretext for immediate decision. The preliminary arrangements were soon made, and after a long railway journey, I found myself one evening after dark at the door of the Avondale Hydropathic Establishment.

Glennie, my friend from St. Austin's, accompanied me, and I was introduced to Mr. Filey, the manager, a tall, gaunt, ungainly, and decidedly unprepossessing individual, who said, "How do you do, sir?" in a sepulchral tone of voice which gave me an unpleasant feeling for fully half an hour. I was provided with something to eat and, fortunately, a cup of tea—instead of the glass of water I had expected—to drink. The tea refreshed me, and I began to look upon things in general more cheerily, and to think that this den of water demons might not be a bad place after all. I was just finishing my repast when the attendant physician, who lived about half a mile away, paid his usual evening visit and looked in upon me. I do not think I ever met a more genial jolly Scotchman (and I have met many of them) than Dr. Graham. We took to each

other at once; and he became confidential enough to drop some hints in the course of our conversation which modified very considerably the ardour of my desire to make the acquaintance of my fellow-patients. When he rose to go home I requested that I might be shown to my room, and that I might be allowed to sleep until half an hour before breakfast.

At eight o'clock, accordingly, I was aroused by a loud knocking, and a hoarse voice at my door. I sprang out of bed at once, dressed hastily, drew up the blind, and looked out of the window to see what kind of place I had been transported to in the dark. The scene was certainly a pleasant one. Immediately below my window was a garden with broad terraces, which formed a winding walk leading down to the bank of one of the stately rivers of the south—a river which for miles of its course flowed slowly and peacefully along, without a turbulent wave or an audible murmur, but just opposite the house danced and glittered in the morning sunlight as it leaped in wild gladness over a roaring and foaming weir; and then, with unsubdued spirit, rushed in whirlpools and eddies through the gothic arches of an ancient bridge that spanned its banks. Beyond and above the river rose a thickly wooded hill, like most of our English hills, of no great magnitude, but having, notwithstanding, a certain majesty of its own; hard to climb, as I afterwards discovered, but very pleasant to gaze upon, with its

forest of dark spruce firs and golden larches, broken here and there by little spaces of refreshing green, surrounding, for the most part, some peasant's cottage, which, from its overhanging roof, adorned by the lichens with patches of warm colour, sent curling wreaths of blue smoke upwards into the clear sharp air, or among the dark stems of the solemn pines. Above or below, as I turned to the right hand or the left, I saw the river gurgling and foaming no longer, but gliding calmly,—


“Trailing its serpent form within the breast
Of that embracing dale,”

accompanied by a trim and sober canal which showed not all its course, but glistened through little breaks in its line of shading trees; river and canal cooling and variegating the whole landscape as they flowed onward, becoming at last lost to sight among the hills on the northern horizon.

I was still surveying the scene before me, when my contemplations were interrupted by the ringing of the breakfast-bell, and I at once obeyed its summons. At the foot of the staircase I met Mr. Filey, who hoped I felt refreshed, and expressed that hope in his most appalling graveyard voice. I was conducted by him into the dining-room, where all the meals of the establishment were devoured, and was there introduced to about a dozen people who, considering that they

were all to some extent invalids, looked in very fair health and uncommonly good spirits. I soon discovered that they had good appetites as well, for they attacked the eatables more like famishing wolves than well-fed human beings; but I had little opportunity of making observations of such gross material matters, for I was compelled, at first by politeness and afterwards by inclination, to apply myself to the feast of reason and flow of soul which was provided by a gentleman who sat next to me and informed me that his name was Stainton; that he was the editor of a newspaper in one of the southern seaport towns; that he occasionally wrote for the magazines; that he considered the water cure a gigantic humbug, but that Avondale was a very healthy place and would most likely do me good; and finally in a series of dislocated and half-whispered sentences, in which I was able to distinguish the words, "queer lot—regular curiosity shop—as good as a play," gave me to understand that if I were interested in human nature my faculties would not for the next few weeks be likely to rust for want of use.

After breakfast, we had prayers, conducted by a dissenting minister with a round rubicund face, an overwhelming expanse of white neckcloth, and a general port-winey expression, which made him look like an old-fashioned country rector in slightly depressed circumstances. He gave us a fine specimen of devotional oratory, but the oratory was rather more prominent



than the devotion ; and I was forcibly reminded of the well-worn anecdote of the American clergyman, of whom it was said that his prayer was "the most eloquent ever addressed to a Boston audience." During the next hour I was, very willingly, monopolized by my editorial acquaintance, who, having satisfied himself that I had not a "mission," and that I had no desire to convert him to anything, informed me that I was an oasis in the desert, and hoped that I would allow him to shelter beneath the palms. We chatted pleasantly until one of the water-demons summoned me to my first bath, which I liked as well as any succeeding one ; that is, not at all ; for water—though scientifically applied—lost no horrors, and gained many, at the Avondale Hydro-pathic Establishment.

I soon saw the meaning of the doctor's veiled hints and of Mr. Stainton's unveiled sarcasms, and became painfully aware that I had got among an extraordinary set of people. Circumstances had brought me into contact with many curious characters, but none of my previous experiences had prepared me for what I met with at Avondale. The first thing which struck me as odd was the peculiar theological atmosphere of the place. Even the dinner-table was made a battle-field, across which the representatives of contending sects and parties flung at each other texts and sarcasms. Almost every patient was a theologian, and every theologian joined in the fray. I found that Mr. Filey

belonged to a community on which Stainton bestowed the undattering title of the Billingsgate Brethren, and two or three others of the party were also Billingsgate brothers or sisters. Unfortunately, however, for our peace of mind, Mr. Filey belonged to the *tweedie-dum* section of the brethren, while a couple named Higgins believed that truth was only to be found among the *familiaris*; and, horrible to relate, there was also a representative of the pure *tweedie* party, which contemptuously ignores both *dum* and *die*, in the person of a Mr. Blayse, a gentleman with a chronic frown, a long nose, and a fearful and wonderful squint.

Now, Mr. Filey, Mr. and Mrs. Higgins, and Mr. Blayse, while they had a noble scorn for the world lying in darkness outside the brotherhood, had also a feeling of cordial hatred for each other—that peculiarly malignant hatred which none of us bestow upon avowed enemies, but reserve for traitors in our own camp. I witnessed many pitched battles and innumerable small skirmishes, and all were conducted with a vigour and decision which did credit to the combatants. They were generally commenced in a cautious and circumspect manner, as if each warrior wished to throw upon one of the others the responsibility of firing the first shot. This generally devolved upon Mrs. Higgins, who would select some neutral individual, and request to be favoured with his opinion on some “precious word”—by which she meant a favourite party text—in one of

the Epistles of St. Paul. If the victim were a stranger and unsuspecting, he was certain to respond, perhaps somewhat lengthily, and then his fate was sealed; for if his reply satisfied Mrs. Higgins, it was sure to bring down upon him the denunciations of Mr. Filey and Mr. Blayse. If, on the contrary, the bird declined to come and be shot, Mrs. Higgins was compelled to utter some *tweedle-dee* shibboleth, and in an instant the great leaders of debate were in arms.

For some time after my arrival the strong theological flavour of the conversation was an inscrutable mystery to me; but at last I found what seemed to be a complete explanation. While waiting for Mr. Filey one day in his private *sanctum*, I saw lying on the table a batch of the most virulent sectarian magazines and newspapers, and in every one of them appeared an advertisement of the Avondale Hydropathic Establishment, which offered as baits, "pure air, judicious treatment, and the advantages of Christian society!" The murder was now out: all my hopes of any change vanished, for I saw that Mr. Filey was bound to maintain the religious wars of the dinner-table in order to preserve the exceptional Christian character of the house. As for me, I had been drawn into a polemical duel with Mr. Blayse which had so soiled my theological reputation—if I ever had any—that I am afraid I did not much care how soon this character, as there exhibited, became a thing of the past.

Very few of the patients were what could be called ordinary people. Those whose "partickler wanity," as Mr. Weller would say, was not theological, had some other distinctive characteristic, either of opinion, manner, or costume. One gentleman, while disavowing Mormonism and professing the most rigid orthodoxy, believed that a sort of christian polygamy would prove a panacea for all social and domestic evils; a little man with a preternaturally white face, often startled strangers by suddenly fixing his eyes, opening his mouth, staring into vacancy as if he were seeing a vision, and celebrating his return to consciousness by some remark as appropriate to the occasion as the statement of Mr. F.'s aunt concerning the milestones on the Dover road; a maiden lady, who was getting into the sere and yellow leaf, used to astonish the natives of the neighbourhood by appearing in the lanes at twilight, robed entirely in most ghostly white; while a middle-aged married couple occupied all their spare time in publicly exchanging little conjugal tenderesses, with an apparent and most embarrassing unconsciousness of the presence of unsympathetic spectators.

Many of the visitors (I will not say *patients* again, the word is so suggestive of hospitals, fever-wards, cancers, and operations) had pet subjects of conversation upon which they enlarged whenever an opportunity presented itself, and very often when it didn't. There


was a Mr. Grigley, who had a craze concerning the iniquities of the Church of England, and also a number of very choice and astounding—not to say improbable— anecdotes of the misdeeds of clergymen. He related them with great glee; indeed the intense joyousness which overspread his countenance when he told us of the intoxicated rector who fell into a grave while reading the burial service, I have never seen surpassed. To bring us all into a proper state of mind with regard to what he called the absurd fiction of the rotundity of the earth—or sometimes, by an unhappy slip, "*the rotundity of the GLOBE*"—was the mission of a Mr. Tinkerton, a gentleman who, like Mrs. Winifred Pryce in the Ingoldsby Legend,—

"was not over young,
Had a very red nose, and a very long tongue";

and who, whenever he was the presiding genius of the hour, which was far too often for our peace, reduced us to a state of bewilderment bordering upon the imbecility which he attributed to Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, and the members of the Royal Society. As a sort of last straw on the camel's back, we had a man who was even more persistent and less edifying than Mr. Tinkerton,—the Reverend Silas Cram, who had just returned from a missionary expedition to India with impaired health but unimpaired eloquence, and who bored us to such an extent that the very words *caste*,

brahmin, and *bungalow* have been abominations to me from that day to this.

Among this heterogeneous party there was of course considerable amusement to be found at times ; but on the whole it resembled those German bands in whose music noise and harmony exist in such painfully unequal proportions. I separated myself as much as possible from the "senior wranglers," the name Stainton had given to the contending sectaries, and attached myself to him and to one or two even more congenial souls who came and made the moral atmosphere cooler and sweeter. As outside the house the spring grew apace, these new comers made a new spring within. The life at last became not only bearable but pleasant, and would have been delightful but for the watery horrors. When the strife of tongues grew very loud, it only drove me out to have an hour with Nature, who will, if she can find a listener, talk unceasingly, but never wrangle. Many of my aqueous associates seemed to regard me as an enemy ; but even at Avondale I found a few people whom to this day I can call friends. Last, not least to me, I found myself gaining strength with almost every hour ; and I do not think it extravagant to say that good health, good spirits, and good friends, are not dearly purchased even by running the gauntlet of society under water.



VIII.

THE AVONDALE CORRESPONDENCE.

I RESCUED the sketch given in the foregoing chapter from a bundle of papers to which Pelican was about to impart additional brilliancy by pushing them into the centre of a glowing fire. He was ashamed of his pen-and-ink picture of hydropathic society, true as it was, with just as much truth as can be infused into a satire, or any account of persons or things having a decided satirical bent. He called it flippant nonsense; and there is undoubtedly a certain flippant vein running through it which prevents it from being fully characteristic; for all Pelican's flippancy was a surface deposit, a fungus called into life by unwholesome atmospheric influences: not a growth from the centre, a product of the soil. Still I preserve it and print it here, partly as a relief to graver matters, but mainly because it exhibits with considerable definiteness one characteristic which was really central,—his hatred of, and contempt for, the dogmatic assertiveness which is dissociated from loving enthusiasm. "I will listen to any man's dogmatism," he would say, "and love him for it, if he is trying with all his heart to make me right; but I will not listen with anything but loathing if he is only trying with all his skill to show that I am wrong."

The whole sketch is evidently intentionally one-sided, and perhaps, with a view to vividness, the angles of character are drawn with some of the sharpness of caricature; but from what I heard of the sayings and doings at Avondale, I am inclined to think that the personages in the picture are taken from life. All such institutions are social republics where individuality has its full fling and every man is a law to himself. The one advantage of this unrestrained outcome of personal idiosyncrasies is that people become really known to each other much more rapidly than they can under ordinary social conditions; the law of like to like operates unchecked; and a friendship, born in an hour, grows to full stature in a week. Pelican's letters, from which the following paragraphs are taken, give a much pleasanter, and really more truthful account of what he met with in the inner world of Avondale and what he brought away with him as a permanent possession.

Cave of the Water Demons. April, 186-.

This week has been wet, and having been unable to get out of doors, I have been compelled to go back to my reading, and have made one noteworthy discovery; for I now find that I never knew before how much delight may be got out of a book. When I come home I shall advise all my friends to do voluntarily what I have been compelled to do of necessity—to give up

all reading for three months, that they may really know what magic lies latent between the two covers of the simplest volume. Only by such an act of asceticism is it possible to render the mental palate sensitive to the full flavour of a fine thought or a musical sentence. Every page has been as delicious to me as the plate of bread and cheese, with the accompanying glass of home-brewed beer, on which you and I have sometimes *heliogabalised* (a splendid word, my own invention,) after a six hours' fast, and a long pedestrian stretch through Cumbrian or Cambrian air. I have been breaking my literary fast with a more dainty dish, viz.:—George Eliot's "Spanish Gypsy," which has been sent to Stainton to be reviewed. I have had great expectations, and they have not been disappointed. It is a great book: a book which appeals to those things in one which lie deepest, and which cannot be moved without a simultaneous upheaval of the whole superincumbent mass of one's nature. I think it is this quality in it which Stainton means to describe, when he speaks of it as a *stirring* book. Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome" are stirring, in the ordinary popular sense of the word; but they touch only the outside shell of our being, while this "Spanish Gypsy" is one of the books which touch the centre. It is, I think, the most melancholy book I ever read in my life: more melancholy than even "Romola," or the "Mill on the Floss." It is really more than melancholy—it is *terrible*: not with

the paltry terror of the sensational romancer, but with that terror which seems inevitably to spring from any unveiling of the deepest facts of human nature and human experience;—those facts which are altogether beyond the reach of our control; which themselves control all other facts; and, howsoever the individual pattern may vary, make up the constant unvarying warp of every life.

Its subject (so far as a dramatic poem can be said to have a subject apart from its plot) is the resistless influence of a man's past over his present and his future: in that past being included not only the few years of his single life, but the past of his family and his race—the past which has made him *who* he is, as well as *what* he is; and has encircled him with an atmosphere of opinion, feeling, taste, and tradition, from which alone he draws the breath of his spiritual life. The hero—or rather, the principal character—of the book is a Spanish duke named Silva, betrothed to Fedalma, a Gypsy girl, who has been brought up by his mother. Fedalma's father, Zarca, a Gypsy leader, finds her out, and commands her to leave her lover and follow him. He is a man whose whole soul is centred in the wellbeing and aggrandizement of his tribe; and he looks forward to a Gypsy kingdom in Africa, of which Fedalma is to be queen. As her father speaks she feels the unconquerable stirrings of race within her; the Zincalo blood surges over and

drowns the foreign will ; and, with unflinching resolve, but ever deepening despair, she follows him, leaving for Don Silva only a brief written farewell. As soon as he discovers her retreat he follows her ; and, finding her still loving but quite inexorable, he turns *his* back upon his nation, his religion, the ties of his past, the traditions of his race ; and, for the sake of his great love, swears allegiance to the Gypsy chief. The fortress of Bedmar which Silva had deserted is taken by Zarca's band ; Silva's friends are slain, and he, overcome with remorse, stabs Zarca. Shortly afterwards he and Fedalma meet for a few moments only to exchange eternal farewells, and the story comes to a solemn end.

The one supremely impressive thing in the poem is the power with which it enforces the idea that a man's past is his absolute master : that for him who breaks with it there is nothing but sharp catastrophe and ruin. Tennyson says,—

“ Man is man, and master of his fate : ”

the whole teaching of the “ Spanish Gypsy ” is, that man is under the dominion of stern laws which he must obey, and inexorable conditions with which he must comply ; meaning by them not the laws and conditions which press equally on all men, but certain fetters which have been forged by Destiny for him alone. If he yield obedience and compliance, these awful powers will be his allies and helpers ; if not, they will fall upon him,

Just now, my girl, and a thousand. We seem to be taught that even a good thing becomes bad when it breaks the continuity and consistency of a life. Even since you turned against the communion, says—

“I love you, my love.”

What should we do—leave the sweet Past torn off
 Our lives and carry that where our heavy lay?
 The loss we have, whatever we will, is worse:
 The old time is dead and the
 The new time is dead, from evening still
 In some measure, by evening measure
 To the new time.

And here, just at the close of the poem, Fialama speaks
 thus of the fate which has ruined and blasted two
 lives—

“Our dear young love—no more was happiness;
 But it had grown into a larger life
 Which we no more could— We needed—
 The larger life, the larger life.”

Thus far the teaching of the book is quite plain; but
 one question is suggested which I do not think is
 answered. Supposing these laws of fate to exist, how
 far are they *moral* laws: that is, how far are we justified
 in defying them and leaving the consequences? Do
 they stand in any relation to our consciences, or are
 they merely unmoral laws like the law of gravitation?
 I look in vain through the book for even a hinted solu-
 tion of this important problem. We are told how Don
 Silva broke away from his past, and how in so doing

he committed a great wrong and brought about a great ruin ; but the ordinary verdict would certainly be that the wrong lay not in the mere act of thus breaking away, but in the treachery, dishonour, and selfishness which that act, *in his case*, necessarily involved ; and that the ruin was the consequence of a wrong which need not *necessarily* be present in a course of action which separates a man from the traditions and associations which belong to the past of himself and his race. If George Eliot wishes to teach that moral wrong was essentially—and not merely accidentally—involved in Silva's acts, the result of such teaching is to make Christianity opposed to the moral order of the universe ; for its first requirement is a forsaking of the things that are behind, and a pressing on to those which are before ;—a renunciation of the past so complete as to justify the use of such figures as resurrection from the dead, and a being born again.

There are many noble passages in the book which, once read, will live in the mind for ever. Here is one upon which I have just opened : it is the only one I have time to quote, for this letter is growing unwieldy. The lines are put into the mouth of Zarca, one of the most purely *heroic* characters in modern literature. Fedalma asks him what certain good will be brought about by her desertion of her lover, and of everything that has hitherto made her life worth living ; and he replies,—

Nay, never falter : no great deed is done
 By falterers who ask for certainty.
 No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
 The undivided will to seek the good :
 'Tis that compels the elements, and wrings
 A human music from the indifferent air.
 The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
 Is to have been a hero. Say we fail !
 We feed the high tradition of the world,
 And have our spirit in Zincalo breasts.

Good-bye. I must write no more. I have just read in a newspaper review that George Eliot is not a poet. The fact that such a judgment is possible overwhelms me with despair. Will criticism ever cease to be a whim and become a science. *Quien sabe?*

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You can easily imagine, my dear Solomon, from what I have told you, that unceasing efforts are made to preserve in this place the odour, not only of sanctity, but of orthodoxy. Black sheep, however, sometimes creep in ; and at present a very black one is at large among the little flock. He rambled into the fold nearly a week ago, and manages to make himself pretty comfortable in spite of the frowns that are cast upon him ; indeed he is one of those adaptable people who might truthfully take as their own the motto which Napoleon at Elba vaingloriously chose for himself—*ubicumque felix*. I think I even see signs that the genial sunniness of his nature is beginning to thaw the ice which at first

surrounded him ; for yesterday Mr. Cram selected him to be the recipient of some of his most thrilling (and incredible) Indian experiences ; and this morning Mrs. Higgins actually offered him a vacant seat in the carriage which three of the tweedle-dee faction were taking out for a drive. His name is Castleburn, and his blackness consists in the fact that he is a Swedenborgian. He is a great lover of out-of-the-way books, and also of those books which are not exactly *out* of the way, but which never seem to be *in* the way—which everybody *knows about*, but which hardly anybody really *knows*. He is a true thinker, and I have got a good deal out of him ; but I have failed to get just the one thing which I thought he would be able to give me : a thorough explanation of Swedenborg's celebrated science of correspondences. Swedenborg, as you know, held the belief, common to many mystical thinkers, that the whole of the visible universe is a collection of signs, or representations, or hieroglyphs of certain spiritual truths. This belief he systematized, and claimed for his system the rank of a science. Not content with the general statement that all things are symbolical and representative, he boldly affirms that the moon corresponds to this, a river to that, and a horse to something else. Now, as in many instances the correspondence between the natural object and the spiritual idea is by no means discernible ; is not in fact—so far as I can see—a correspondence at all, but a mere arbitrary conjunction, I

want to discover the *rationale* of the scheme—the something which gives it a right to the name of a science. For example: a horse, says Swedenborg, as quoted by Emerson, signifies carnal understanding. This may or may not be true; but what I want to know is, *why* carnal understanding should be signified by a horse, and not by a cow, or a mountain, or an east wind; for there seems no such obvious connection existing between the two as there is, for instance, between heat and love, or between water and purity. This difficulty I have put before Mr. Castleburn over and over again; but I can get from him no satisfactory solution of it. He refers me to Swedenborg, and has lent me some of his books which, though full of most interesting matter, leave my special question really unanswered. My firm conviction is, that Swedenborg, though he had proved himself a clever road-maker in his own country, made a great mistake when he thought it possible to lay down a royal road to the spiritual significance of the universe by means of the machinery of any science of correspondences. St. Paul was right when he said that spiritual things are spiritually discerned; and reason and faith seem equally to prompt the thought, that in proportion as a man grows in the knowledge of God—and *only in such proportion*—will he grow in the knowledge of the Divine symbolism with which every object in the universe is charged. Only as a man knows the Father can he possibly know the meaning of any word of His, whether

that word be written in the plain letters of a book, or in the mysterious hieroglyphs of nature. The God within can alone hold intercourse with the God without. To Peter Bell the primrose by the river's brim will for ever be a primrose, and nothing more ; while to William Wordsworth the meanest flower that blows can give "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

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The last few fine days have brought several additions to our society, and most of them have been of the right sort. They seem to have produced really a chemical change in the moral and social atmosphere. The most interesting and amusing of these new arrivals is a Mr. Wilks, who is a real *character*, and whose life has been a perfect romance. He began his career as a shoemaker and a local preacher among the Methodists. At the time of the Chartist agitation he rushed into politics, became one of its most notorious supporters in his own part of the country, and very narrowly escaped imprisonment. When Chartism collapsed, he took to lecturing on theology, phrenology, and the literature of labour ; and is now established in some town of the north of England, where he keeps a bookseller's shop, and examines people's heads—phrenologically, of course. He is, at present, a sceptic of the most advanced type, but as this fact is not generally known here, he is deservedly popular among the straitest of our Pharisees. I say *deservedly* popular, for I believe

him to be a man of real worth ; and concerning his entertaining powers there cannot be two opinions. He has seen publicly overhauling the heads of two or three of us, among them that of P. P. ; and though my virtues came to the front in rather too imposing a manner, the estimate as a whole seemed very fair. I was very much tickled at being told that I was fitted by nature to be the editor of a newspaper. You ought really to try to get funds to start a Brookfield Gazette, and enable me to take the editorial chair. We should have to get all the spiteful people in the neighbourhood to contribute personalities to make it sell ; for, as you know, politics is not my strong point. When I am alone I am always, sure that I am a Liberal of the most fervent order ; but whenever I hear popular Liberalism talked I begin to suspect that I am an antiquated Tory. I am sure my organ would play so very unintelligible a tune, that I should get more kicks than halfpence. A few notes from "God save the Queen," alternating between bars of the "Marseillaise," and "A man's a man for a' that," would produce so disturbing an effect on the popular mind, that both the grinder and his instrument would, I fear, come to an untimely end. Still, it seems hard that destiny should be thwarted by a personal peculiarity like this, of which, I suppose, my faithless skull gives no indication.

Wilks has a few books with him, and among them is the "Life of Andrew Combe," by his brother George. I have dipped into it, and have found a few very curious

literary pearls. It contains passages which are—quite unintentionally—much more amusing than the majority of deliberate jokes. The author's description of Andrew's mother, who was of course his own also, is sublimely grotesque. There is generally some vestige of tender sentiment hanging round a man's memories of his dead mother, and even if the emotion be absent he feels it decorous to assume some imitation of it. The place which it occupies—or does not occupy—in this biography may be judged from the following extract:—“Marion Newton, the mother of Andrew Combe, was born at Curriehill, on the 18th of June, 1757. She was of middle stature, *of a nervous and bilious temperament*, and full of life and energy. *Her head was of an average size*, but very favourably proportioned. The perceptive organs predominated slightly over the reflecting organs, giving her an eminently practical character: benevolence, cautiousness, conscientiousness, and firmness, were largely developed,” etc., etc. This is very fine. We have heard of the man who would botanise upon his mother's grave, but the man who phrenologises upon it is to me an incomparably funnier object. What sweet memories are these. We ask if his mother were good and gentle, and we are told that she had a nervous and bilious temperament. The words sound of evil omen, but we continue our speculations. This departed one, now sacred with the sacredness of death, had doubtless loving eyes, and a smile which sent heaven into the hearts of her children?

Her son does not remember these things ; but he knows that her head was of average size, and very favourably proportioned. Did she teach Andrew his first little prayer, watch at the window for his return from school, or try with a mother's loving weakness to hide his little faults? Our questions remain unanswered : these things must be for ever unknown ; but we have the much more valuable information that perception and reflection were properly proportioned, and that four highly respectable organs were in flourishing condition. This is the scientific side of filial affection. Not being scientific myself, I can only say to me it seems intensely comic.

As Spinoza saw everything in God, so the Combes saw everything through a phrenological medium. Andrew, writing from Italy, oddly apologises for giving no accurate account of the Italians by saying that he abstained from going "into public places *or into situations where he could observe their heads uncovered.*" In a letter describing his voyage he gives a curious description of a little accident. He hears a noise on board, thinks the vessel has struck, and then, he writes, "I ran up, undressed, to perish on deck rather than die in the cabin. The captain soon undeceived me. The second mate, when at the helm, was knocked down by the tiller (the tiller-rope having snapped) and *received a severe contusion on TUNE.*" Let us hope that at least sufficient melody was left in the unfortunate man to enable him to defy the element which had used him so badly, with an emphatic musical

enunciation of the well-known fact that Britannia rules the waves, and that Britons—in spite of severe contusions—never, never, never will be slaves.

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When I wrote last I told you of my new acquaintance Mr. Wilks. I don't want to bore you with him, and I know I cannot make him as interesting in a letter as he is in himself; but I must tell you of a little encounter (if I may call it so) which amused me very much. The day before yesterday I expressed some curiosity to see one or two of his anti-theistic and anti-Christian books and pamphlets. He said he would be glad to lend them to me, but first he must ask me one question concerning my attitude with regard to the subjects discussed in them. "Are you," said he, solemnly, "open to conviction?" "Oh, dear, no," said I, with bland frankness, "decidedly not!" I shall never forget his face when I made this startling declaration. For nearly a quarter of a minute a sort of rigid, petrified, semi-cataleptic expression overspread his countenance; and then he burst out into a loud laugh of enjoyment, shook my hand frantically, and declared that I was the first honest Christian he had ever met. "There are none of them open to conviction," said he; "but to think that I should live to hear any one confess it. *Nunc dimittis!*" "There is no reason in the world why they shouldn't confess it," I said; "it is nothing to be ashamed of. A man, who is a


Christian in very deed, cannot, from the nature of the case, be open to conviction; for his Christianity is not an opinion. Opinions may vary and pass away; but, if you once *know* a thing, you can't be argued out of your knowledge. To me, and to thousands, faith in the being of God, the divineness of Christ, the efficacy of prayer, is not the result of a logical balance in their favour after a summing up of the arguments *pro* and *con*; but is based on the immediate, conscious perception of the soul. The objects of this faith, or perception, lie beyond proof and beyond disproof; and with regard to them I am no more open to conviction than I am with regard to my own existence or yours. The arguments intended to demolish them may be very interesting and ingenious, but then—there the things are. All Christians see them, feel them, know them; and if they speak of being open to conviction, they are simply talking inconsistent nonsense!" This seemed to strike him as a new view of the case, but he soon began to talk about the unsatisfactory nature of the evidences; and I fear I gave way to the usual ill-temper with which I am afflicted whenever I contemplate those fatuous futilities. I remember I expressed a wish that all the evidences of Christianity were at the bottom of the sea, and that those sceptic-manufacturers, Paley and Butler, had never been born. I know I raged on in a most extravagant style; but I think the sense of it all was sane and sober enough. Evidences of Christianity are, after all, nothing but an

impertinence. If it cannot produce its own evidences, what is it worth? Humanity cannot find rest in the result of a logical process. If a man does not *feel* that Christianity is *true*, I care little to make him *think* that it is *highly probable*. Evidences have made a doubter of Wilks: some day Christianity itself will make him a believer. He has, I am sure, the two essentials which makes God's revelation not only possible, but finally certain,—love of truth, and fidelity to conscience.

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I must tell you in this letter of a piece of mild dissipation in which I have been indulging. At breakfast, the other morning, Stainton informed us that Mr. George Dawson was going to lecture at St. Austin's on "Old Books," and that he intended to hear him. I at once decided to go too, and Mr. Castleburn was afterwards induced to accompany us. The lecture was a great treat: I only wish I could give you an impression of it. Unfortunately, this is the very thing I can't do. I could give you an account of it, and in the case of most lectures this would be enough; but an account of George Dawson and his lecture would give you no more idea of him and it than a description of one of our sunsets could convey an impression of its changeful splendours. I might say that he is something like A——, with a slight suggestion of B——, or that at times he reminded me of C——; but unfortunately there is an exceptionally

large *residuum* which is like nothing but itself. If I could give you the lecture word for word, it would be of little use ; for though the lecture is much, the man is more. His best things are telling enough in themselves, and you would feel them to be so if you read them in the quiet of your own room ; but from his lips they are ever so much more telling, for they come with all the impetus of a strong individuality behind them. A cannon ball, if it drop on your toes, will crush them by the simple force of its own weight ; but when projected from an Armstrong gun, it will shiver to splinters a mass of opposing granite. When you hear George Dawson, you have the ball from the cannon, or, perhaps I ought to say, the bullet from the rifle ; for his artillery is effective rather than heavy. His mission is to hit folly with an epigram, not to batter down crime with a denunciation ; and if we wanted a new reformation, we might look to him to play the part of an Erasmus, not of a Luther. (You know how much I admire Erasmus ; so you won't, as many people would, suppose that I mean this for an accusation.) He has plenty of confidence in himself : you see this at once ; but somehow he seems to have a right to it. He talks to his audience in a way that in another man would be an impertinence ; but you can't feel that *he* is impertinent. I noted down two or three of the sayings which struck me ; but as I couldn't send George Dawson with them, perhaps you would not see much in them, though I see a good deal still. One of



his figures was however so very happy that I can send it to you without any fear of its deterioration upon the journey. I do not even need to label it "This side up ; with care !" It will do any side up. He used it in speaking of the memoirs of Pepys and Evelyn, and of all those books which bring down to us the light chit-chat of the ages which without them would be to us as dead — ruthlessly suffocated by the dignity of history. "Contemporary gossip," said he, "is contemptible ; the gossip of two hundred years ago is charming. *The fly, when it has got into the amber, is worth its weight in gold ; but the fly, before it gets into the amber, is a pestilence and a nuisance.*" I guess, as the Yankees say, that I have added another link to your chain of associated ideas. You will never see a fly in amber now without thinking of gossip and George Dawson.

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I write to you to-day at what I really hope is the end of a second deluge. Unless it has occasionally left off for a few minutes in the middle of the night (which I don't believe), it has rained unceasingly for more than a week. From this state of things two consequences have flowed : (1) Every one has been compelled to keep within doors ; and, (2) Every one has been very cross. You will easily imagine that with me a third consequence has followed these : a hasty and agonized flight from the wrangling of society to the sweet solace of

literary loneliness. I really fear I have been indulging in a literary debauch, and that I shall be the worse for it after. You shall hear and judge. At all events, I hope the rain will stop when I get to the end of the book I am working upon at present; for if I am tempted to begin another the consequences must be terrible. I am reading, for the second time, Lewes's "Biographical History of Philosophy;" and I must confess it gives me very great pleasure. Though so many parts of the book are intensely repellent to me, the style, with its exquisite clearness and ease—here and there its absolute brilliance—has a wonderful charm. Its general conclusion,—that the best and wisest of men in all ages have, like the baby crying for the moon, been striving after something which no man can possibly grasp—seems to me horribly incredible. We are *beings*, and no positive philosophy will ever eradicate the craving for a knowledge of being; neither M. Comte nor Mr. Lewes will ever persuade mankind to be satisfied with the barren field of phenomena. If, as Mr. Lewes says, reason will not carry us beyond the field of phenomena, we must fall back upon faith; and though he exclaims against a mixture of faith and philosophy, he cannot himself avoid it. Belief in the law of gravitation, when carefully analysed, is discovered to be as real an exercise of faith as is belief in the existence of a God with certain attributes. Both are conclusions which are not found in the premisses; or, rather, the major premiss in both cases is assumed.

Both are (considered philosophically) consistent hypotheses, which fit the facts they are intended to explain ; but they are not found *in the facts*, and belief in them is therefore an act of faith. When I say, "the force of attraction is (*in every instance with which we are acquainted*) directly as the mass, and inversely as the square of the distance,"¹ I have science and philosophy to back me ; but if I leave out the parenthetical words of qualification, I am as truly in the region of faith as I am when I say, "God is love !"

So much for philosophy and Mr. Lewes. I will not so far delude you as to let you suppose that his biographical history is a fair sample of my deluge studies. I have been going heavily into poetry and fiction ; and, in consequence, my mind seems full of floating nebulous thoughts, which persistently refuse to resolve themselves into definite, starry spheres. I made, however, an observation or criticism—call it what you will—so lately as this morning while lazily turning over the leaves of my Tennyson. It is this. There are some poems which have more of the characteristics of music than of poetry : that is, their power lies more in what they suggest than in what they express. Just as the musician, by a few simple chords, is able to interpret for us the mystery of love, agony, aspiration,—so there are some poets who, with means equally incommensurate—such, for example, as the grouping of a few of the simplest natural objects—are able to bring home to

us a new wealth of passion and emotion. I don't think there is a better illustration of this than Tennyson's "Break, break, break!" It is one of the most perfect and *adequate* poems he has written; and yet if you estimate it by common-sense measurement, there is nothing in it but a little bit of marine landscape, and a short sigh for a vanished past. Read two verses:—

"Oh well for the fisherman's boy
That he shouts with his sister at play!
Oh well for the sailor-lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

"And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But, oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!"


How much is suggested here, but how little is said; and even in what *is* said there is an unconnectedness, an inconsequence. *Why* is it well for the sailor-lad that he sings in his boat on the bay? We feel why, but the poem does not tell us; just as we feel the untold meaning of one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*, for which we have to find our own subject. Again: what is the connection between the first and the second half of the latter of the two verses? The logical man will say, "None at all;" and he will be right from his point of view, for the link which binds together in one perfect verse the stately ships and the vanished hand is not

logical but spiritual. - But though spiritual, it is neither weak nor impalpable ; on the contrary, it is so strong and so consciously real, that we have perforce to make literary dissectors of ourselves before we are able to discover the want of superficial connectedness. In the first and last verses of the poem, which impart their perfume of tender regret to the two which come between, as a casket of sandal-wood sheds its odour upon the treasure which it enshrines, the vague suggestiveness is still in the ascendant. The epithets "cold" and "grey," in the first verse, are exquisitely chosen ; but their intentional use is passionate rather than picturesque. They indeed give distinctness to a picture ; but still more do they help to intensify the suggestion of an emotion. The poem, as a whole, has the characteristics both of poetry and painting ; but its chief charm to those who love it best is identical with that which resides in some sweet strain of mournful music.

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I have been discussing the great pulpit question two or three times lately, and your description of the new curate at St. Cuthbert's arrives very opportunely. The people there must be highly favoured, but I don't suppose they will be at all quick to see what a piece of extraordinary good fortune has fallen to their share. And yet, judging from your letter, it must be extraordinary indeed. A thoroughly intellectual preacher

is a *rara avis*, as indeed is a thoroughly intellectual man in any profession; but a preacher in whom the intellectual and the spiritual elements exist conjointly in anything like equally large proportions, belongs to the most exceptional species of the black swan race. I fancy it must be this fact which, more than any other single circumstance, accounts for the lack of moral power in the pulpit utterances of the clergy in our day. We have spiritual men who are not intellectual, and we have intellectual men who are not spiritual; while in some places (particularly in Brookfield) we find, as a general rule, men who are neither the one nor the other. We have on the one side, clearly-defined, well-considered theological utterances; on the other, devout meditations and thrilling appeals. It is, however, almost universally true that the men in the first class do not themselves rise into the spiritual region at all; and the men in the second class are unable to raise others. When I was a boy, as you know, I spent nearly all my time among Dissenters. I can never acknowledge fully all my moral and spiritual obligations to them, for they were holy men and women who walked with God, and made me feel that God was walking with them. Still, they were intellectually weak and narrow, and inclined to disparage the entire mental region. No proposition was more consistently maintained among them, than that intellectual power was not necessary for ministerial success; no text oftener quoted among



them than the one which declares that God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. They pointed to ignorant old women knowing nothing of the alphabet, but filled with the grace of God; and then recited the histories of men whose towering intellects gave a fearful emphasis to their earthly, sensual, and devilish lives. They asserted that as the intellectual was entirely distinct from the spiritual, the purely spiritual work of the preacher needed no intellectual aids; but that, on the contrary, intellectual power often proved the most dangerous of all stumbling-blocks. At that period of my life I think I admired intellect above everything else; and the conclusions of my friends were so repulsive to me, that I not only rejected them but also the premisses on which they were based. The error was natural enough, but I am wiser now. I see that the premisses were right, but unfortunately there were not enough of them; and a link was therefore omitted in the argument which threw the conclusion wrong. The good people forgot that a man may habitually live in the region of spiritual realities and yet not possess the power of raising others to his own position, just as the greatest linguist is not necessarily the best teacher of languages. Spirituality, like electricity, can only be communicated through a medium denser than itself, and this medium consists of ideas and words. There

is no task that needs more clearness of mind and subtle accuracy of expression than the translation of spiritual truths, which in their fulness can only be spiritually discerned, into such formulæ as can be appreciated by the unspiritual intellect. Some very earnest preachers attempt to do this, and fail miserably because of their want either of knowledge or mental power; and the failure is more melancholy because one of its most certain effects is the alienation of intellectual men from the spiritual side of religion altogether.

On the other hand we have a large class of preachers who in greater or less degree ignore the spiritual element in religion, and are either theologians or moralists pure and simple. They enforce upon their congregations the preëminent necessity either of assenting to certain articles of faith or of conforming to certain rules of life. They often perform their work as well as it is possible to perform it; but though their sermons may be admirable as intellectual performances or literary compositions, they are, as sermons, simply worthless, because they ignore the very thing for which a sermon exists,—the stimulation of the spiritual energies of the hearers. Such preaching always reminds me of Dickens' description of Mr. Winkle's shooting, which, as a display of fancy shooting was admirable, but as a specimen of shooting with intent to hit anything in particular was a decided failure.

I hope to hear our local Chrysostom next Sunday,

or, at the very latest, the Sunday after ; for there is an end even of the charms of Avondale, and were this an earthly paradise I should have no excuse for staying in it any longer, for I am becoming a perfect Hercules. Whether I am destined to bestow upon Brookfield the renown which belongs to any parish in which a poet has been a ratepayer, I don't know ; but I have of late made nearly a bushel of lyrical poetry of which I inclose a sample. One or two prosaic people who are here say that they cannot understand it. What a pity every one is not in their condition. I think I know two people at least—I am *not* one of them—for whom it would serve as a piece of autobiography. Of all powers possessed by women, the power of spoiling a man's life finally and irretrievably seems to me the most terrible, because one never knows when the fatal influence has exhausted itself. It passes through the man to some other woman, blighting her life with his blight, and so on, and on, to stop—who shall say when or where?

A BROKEN GOBLET.

Oh ! could I give to thee, my love,
A heart like that which once was mine ;
Could I life's goblet see, my love,
Filled once again with sparkling wine,
Our days might then be half-divine.

But all the while I grieved, my love,
Ah me, the spring it was said!
That my pain never be filed, my love,
The days are dead when as a lad
The rich grape-perfume made me glad.

I raised the goblet high, my love,
Between mine eyes and the spring sun;
My lips and throat were dry, my love,
With great desire to take but one
Deep draught before my days were done.

There came one from the South, my love,
Ah me, but she was very fair!
With tender, tremulous mouth, my love,
And deep soft eyes and golden hair.—
Sunlight was brighter, striking there.

I seem to see her stand, my love,
As in the days that now are dead;
The goblet in one hand, my love,
The other held a rose full red;—
Ah me, the rose-leaves soon were shed!

Those lips spoke pleasant things, my love;
Those eyes undid me utterly;
And like close-netted strings, my love,
Her clinging hair imprisoned me,
And I cared nowise to be free.

I tell to you this tale, my love;
Ev'n now your sweet eyes fill with tears;
I cannot weep or wail, my love,
As I could once, in the young years
Ere I had done with hopes and fears.

But listen longer still, my love :
 She gave the goblet unto me,
She bade me drink my fill, my love,
 Saying, " Life's goblet foams for thee ;"
 And then she watched me eagerly.

I raised it to my mouth, my love,
 I tasted once that sweet strange draught ;
And then she from the South, my love,
 Raised her lithe arm, and then a waft
 Of air I felt, and then she laughed.

And there upon the ground, my love,
 The goblet lay that had been mine !
And the rank weeds around, my love,
 Drank deeply of that perfect wine
 Whose blood-red stain seemed like a sign.

And then she rose and stood, my love,
 And looked and laughed full in my face ;
(Were those stains wine or blood, my love ?
 I cannot tell.) A moment's space
 She gazed and stood still in her place.

And then she turned and went, my love,
 A low, strange, thrilling song sang she ;
And as she went she sent, my love,
 The rose-leaves floating heavily
 Downward : she cast no glance at me.

And I lay there as dead, my love,
 What had been *me* indeed had died ;
As rose plucked from the bed, my love,
 Its petals scattered far and wide,
 Blown by wild winds from every side.

And so I say again, my love,
The life that has been now is o'er ;
Give not thyself the pain, my love,
Of waiting on a low, lone shore,
A broken wave that comes no more.

But leave me still alone, my love ;
Why didst thou give thine heart to me ?
Keep it : it is thine own, my love,
And turn thee quickly ; turn and flee,
Lest death like mine lay hold on thee.

Yet could I give to thee, my love,
The heart that in those days was mine ;
Could I life's goblet see, my love,
Remade, refilled with sparkling wine,
Perchance thou might'st be mine—I thine.

IX.

OUR ECCLESIA.


I NEVER saw Pelican more thoroughly alive than during the few months of the autumn and winter which followed the Avondale period of his experience. In spite of his comical aversion to water, it had apparently acted upon him as the very wine of life. Not only was he stronger in body, but all his intellectual sensibilities and his spiritual sympathies seemed to have been quickened. A change—if the result of inevitable growth can be called a change—had for some time been creeping over him, and now its character became clearly defined. The pugnacity which had been so characteristic of him, and which had been fostered by a solitude seldom broken but by uncongenial invasions, had declined under the very influences which might have been expected to strengthen and confirm it. He was silenter than of old, and yet more impressive; his individuality seemed in a few months to have outgrown the ancient necessity for self-assertion. The Avondale campaigns had made him feel the bliss of rest, not from labour but from conflict. More clearly than ever, there arose in his mind the conception of truth as a vision to be beheld, rather than as a fortress to be taken by storm. A new humility seemed to possess him, and

where there had been strength there was now grace as well ; or rather, should I not say, grace appeared as a sign that strength was being perfected ? He had always been a good listener, but he had, in the past, listened with his hand upon his sword. He was, even in the old days, a boon companion at every intellectual banquet, but he came as a warrior not less than a feaster ; and it might always be said that,—

“ He carved at the meal
With gloves of steel
And drank the red wine through the helmet barred.”

Now all was changed. He talked with greater freshness and vivacity than ever ; but the growth that had taken place was evidenced more clearly by his silence than by his speech. He had always been eager to learn, he was now eager to be taught ; and there are those who know from their own experience that this is not a distinction without a difference. When he listened and no teaching came, he turned away quietly to seek for it elsewhere, and found what he wanted at last.

One of these turnings away resulted in the formation of an association which caused an amount of scandal in the neighbourhood quite disproportionate to its very quiet and unassuming character. It was composed of half a dozen men, nearly all young, who, being from different causes dissatisfied with the spiritual nutriment obtained from the authorized religious instructors at Brookfield,



were, for the most part, wandering aimlessly through "the centre of indifference" in the direction of the "everlasting No!" The fact was, our little suburb was singularly poverty-stricken in what are called—sometimes with terrible, unconscious irony—"the means of grace." Neither at St. Cuthbert's church nor at the little Independent chapel was there any chance of obtaining that vital stimulation of the spiritual energies which will always present itself to some natures as the one supreme necessity. Even out of the noble liturgy of the Church the life can too easily be taken by perfunctory recitation; and its light is too often effectually darkened by the shadow of the inevitable sermon. It was so at St. Cuthbert's. The black swan of a curate alluded to in Pelican's letter from Avondale soon departed—driven away, it was generally believed, by the jealousy from which even the clerical heart is not free; and after he was gone, the coldness which had always reigned in the ancient temple became more chilling than ever. Pelican—a churchman, not by birth nor perhaps by conviction, but rather by a sort of irresistible spiritual gravitation—was compelled to seek refuge from the inclemency of St. Cuthbert's within the walls of the chapel. If I may be allowed a somewhat startling change of metaphor, I will say that he found he had made the old and too familiar jump from the frying-pan into the fire. The High-Church Dissenting minister to whom reference has been made, had gone to his own

place, and was now a hard-working curate, with heart and head alike full of sacramental grace and schemes of social regeneration. He was succeeded first by a militant Christian who lost his congregation by addressing his sermons to sceptics who could never be brought to listen to them ; and then by a dapper young man with scrupulously brushed scarlet hair, a full-moon face, a feline walk, and a general air of oily self-satisfaction. The emphatic commonplaces of this individual, who believed that the supreme duty of the community was to disestablish the Church, and that the Divine call to the individual was in a pleasant and respectable way to make the best of both worlds, were even less satisfying and more repellent to Pelican than the vicar's flat paraphrases of the epistle or the gospel for the day. At last he seemed to grow desperate. "I am beginning to feel," he said, one Sunday, "that for me church-and-chapel going is nothing but Sabbath-breaking, and that I can't keep it up any longer without committing sin. It is hardening my heart, and souring my temper, and deadening my soul." I looked at him, rather amused than surprised at this sudden outburst. He surveyed me ferociously as if I were the incarnation or the advocate of the object of his horror ; and there was a moment's pause, during which neither of us said anything. Then, all at once, as if a thought had suddenly struck him, his face brightened, and he exclaimed, "Why should we let the parsons starve or poison us? Why should we not

have a church of our own? It would not be an altogether unprecedented experiment, for there is a story of an old Quaker who met by himself in his own house every First Day. I dare say it did him more good than either the vicar or the shepherd has ever done to either of us, though he missed the social element of worship which we should have, even if there were only you and I to follow his example. But I am sure I know two or three who would join us, and we might really be of some help to each other."

Some names were then mentioned, and as no complex organization was needed, Pelican's new ecclesiastical idea soon became an accomplished fact. It was proposed that we should meet first at one house and then at another; but it was finally decided that, as my rooms were most centrally situated, I should have the sole honour of giving shelter to the little revolutionary band of worshippers. I say revolutionary, for in this light our movement appeared to outsiders; but it was really a very different spirit from that of rebellion or innovation which animated either the leader or his followers. Drawn together by a common sense of unsatisfied spiritual hunger, they met, not to make a scornful, or even indignant, protest against those whom they had asked for bread in vain; but for the less sublime, though more practical, purpose of distributing to each other. Never, even among the silent Friends, were meetings less formal than those of our new brotherhood. We had an

appointed place and time of meeting, but everything else was left to the inspiration of the hour; for in a community so small and so sympathetic there was little fear of liberty degenerating into licence. Common devotion and mutual religious teaching and stimulation were the ends we had in view, but we recognised no exclusive machinery. Prayers, liturgical and extemporaneous; hymns and religious poems, said or sung; readings, not only from the Bible, but from the spiritual literature of all ages and sects: sermons and addresses original and selected; occasional intervals of still, Quaker-like meditation:—all these were used in irregular succession as means of grace.

There was no formally recognised leader, but from the beginning the practical leadership was in the hands of the man who had called the community into being, and hardly a Sunday passed without some utterance from Paul Pelican. Many of his outpourings were results of some momentary impulse; but he gave us something more than the expression of hasty thoughts or passing moods. There lies before me as I write a heap of MSS.;—sermons, meditations, poems, all carefully prepared, and dedicated to the service of what he always called *Our Ecclesia*. Curiously characteristic, these ecclesiastical relics are also curiously dissimilar; and a stranger might find it difficult to discover the gleaming thread of individuality which runs through their varied pattern and changeful colouring. Many of them have much

of the mysticism which always, to some extent, characterized him, and which became more marked as time went on ; but he never loses his hold upon the practical, and indeed maintains again and again that the road through mysticism must always, if the heart be right, have its end not in mere passive sanctity but in active saintliness ; that the clear vision is always given to aid in the performance of the helpful deed. I am compelled to treat these papers as I have already treated Pelican's conversation and correspondence—to give a handful of seed as a sample of the store in the granary.

What is the great demand of Christianity ? We know and yet we do not know. We utter the word *Faith*, but we utter it wearily and despairingly, and our hearts are sore with effectless endeavours to penetrate its mystery. We apply to teachers, but their words seem in vain, for words can only hint at the unknown by means of symbols from the known. You have heard the story of the man born blind, who said that he thought the colour of red must be like the sound of a trumpet. How good was his definition, and yet how poor and fruitless. *We* see its force, for we have known the flush of the dawn, and the crimson of the sunset, and the glory of the rose, and our hearts have stirred within us at the trumpet's call ; but to the child born in prison, who has seen only walls of grey, what bugle note will give a vision of the curtains of God's pavilion, of the burning splendour of

the flower of Sharon? The teacher who, when asked of faith, speaks of belief, is vainly blowing a meaningless trumpet-blast into the ear of the prison-child. If he have faith himself, he knows that between faith and belief there is as much resemblance as there is between a martial sound and a martial colour,—no more. Belief is only a known something in one world corresponding to an unknown something in the other. When we say "Faith is belief," we are giving a parable, not a definition : just as we are when we say, "Man is a flower." And the symbol chosen is not perfect even as a symbol. Belief is an action of the intellect. Faith is an action neither of the intellect nor of the senses, but of the two it corresponds more truly with the latter than with the former. Faith is, in fact, the sensation of the soul. It is not belief, but sight. It is not comprehension, but apprehension. It is the faculty by which spiritual existences become as real to the soul as form and colour are to the eye ; which presents God and divine things to us, not as hypotheses to be accepted, but as objects to be known ; as dear and blessed realities, which the world of intellect and speculation cannot give, and which, we gratefully know, it cannot take away.


You prove to me by laborious, and to you convincing, arguments, that the existence of God is impossible ; but while you are speaking to my ear, He comes Himself and speaks to my heart, saying, "I am with thee;" and what avails argument after such a moment of communion?

The belief which evidence creates, counter-evidence can destroy ; over the faith which comes of immediate vision it has no power. Nicodemus says, " We know that Thou art a teacher come from God : *for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.*" He was graciously pleased to consider Christ's credentials satisfactory ; he had the honour of being the first convert to those " evidences of Christianity" which, in these latter days, are put before us as the very ark of God on which alone His presence can rest. And how was He received ? By an utter denial of any power in sense or intellect to give to man a divine vision. " You fancy,"—so Christ seems to say, " that through the eyes of your flesh and of your mind you have had a revelation of my divineness. You have seen my miracles, you have drawn your conclusion, and you think that through that conclusion you have seen me. You are mistaken. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The conclusion that I am from God, because of my mighty works, is of the one ; the knowledge of me, which is salvation, is of the other. You can trace the whole chain of evidence, you see it beginning in miracle, you think you see it ending in manifestation of the Christ. But this is not the method of my revelation. My kingdom is not something to which you can come ; it is something which comes to you, and can only come when you are

ready to receive it. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, *but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth*: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

He that doeth righteousness is righteous. By their fruits ye shall know them. How true these sayings are, and how terrible is the mistake committed by any of us who are ever tempted to attribute to policy, love of fame, fear of hell, or other low motive, the holy living of those whose beliefs differ from our own. Is it not as plain as sunlight that in so doing we are betraying Christianity into the hands of its deadliest enemies, who will soon turn round triumphantly to ask what need there is for the grace of God if mere self-interest will produce such goodness? If ever the Holy Ghost is blasphemed with unpardonable blasphemy, it is when His manifestations in human lives are thus scorned and belied.

My friends, I am tired of this ceaseless babble against creeds. I am tired of hearing people exclaim against what they call the narrowness of assuming anything like finality in matters of religion. I am tired of the flippant accusation of presumption, hurled against the man who dares to keep a stock, however small, of closed questions. I am aware that taking this position places me in a miserable minority, for its untenable nature is generally assumed



as a thing beyond all question. An influential religious community has given to its newspaper organ the title of *The Inquirer*; and we all know scores of good and thoughtful men who practically regard a position of oscillation and suspense as the only one which, with regard to Divine things, we can legitimately occupy. It appears to me that such an attitude of mind brings theology down from the region of supreme realities into that of frivolous and wearisome playthings. In the domain of physics or of morals we should be ashamed to content ourselves with hypotheses which bring to us no feeling of certitude; how much more should we be ashamed of such mean content in the domain of religion. The law of gravitation is not to us a matter of doubt. The sin of lying, the duty of beneficence, the obligation to self-sacrifice for the welfare of others, are not, thank God, open questions with Christian Englishmen. It is not with regard to *them* that we deem it fitting and decorously humble to assume the attitude of inquirers; but rather with regard to those Divine truths *upon which they are based*, and in virtue of which alone even they become not hypotheses but certainties.

That gravitation will act to-morrow as it has acted for centuries of centuries, becomes a certitude of the highest character only when a living immutable Will is recognised as acting behind it. In like manner, if truth, beneficence, self-sacrifice, are accepted without question as duties of ours, how practically illogical it is on the part of a Christian

to make open questions of the doctrines in which alone they find their highest sanctions : such doctrines as those which proclaim that God's word cannot fail, that His tender mercies are over all His works, that He so loved the world as to become incarnate for its salvation. What is the use of shrieking against dogmas, of denouncing theology in order to uphold morals, when it is the very mission of theology to provide morals with a Divine basis by exhibiting the archetype of human morality existing for ever in the nature of God? Where will you get a moral stimulant equal to the one which theology supplies? Be ye perfect, *as your Father who is in heaven is perfect*. Only because a desired grace exists in Him, can I hope to have it existing with eternal vitality in me. Without dogma, anything but an empirical morality is impossible ; and such a morality is powerless to control the passions of mankind when they rise in their might. We can never go astray in holding to dogmas so long as we remember the work they have to accomplish ; though we must not forget in the ardour of our devotion that the grandest dogma can avail us nothing if it bring with it no interpretation of moral problems or no stimulation of spiritual energies ; that then it becomes poison instead of food ; then, instead of fruits of the tree of life, our creed produces for us only a Dead Sea harvest—apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah.

“The thing that has been shall be,” says the preacher

of despair; but the words which in his mouth were a wail of scepticism, may be in ours the joyful cry of faith and hope. It is possible that with you and with me the moment of insight and revelation, when God seemed real and duty plain, has passed away; and we are left with a memory which is too dim to have any inspiring power. If this be so let us say, boldly, "The thing that has been shall be; the hour of unveiling will come again if I only wait in steadfast patience; the dawn will again break upon me if I keep my face towards the East!" and in so saying we shall be strengthened and blessed. We cannot always be on the mount of transfiguration; but we shall have with us in the valley the inspiration of the transfiguring moment if we will only believe that from that very valley Tabor rises, and that the thing which has been, is and shall be, though our eyes can only at times behold its glory.

No English poet has taught a deeper lesson than that to be found in one verse of Matthew Arnold's:—

"We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery the soul abides:
But tasks in hours of insight willed,
May be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

This is true,—grandly, nobly true; but our difficulty will always be to maintain the conviction that there really has been an hour of insight at all, for the profaneness of the

present discredits the sacredness of the past. It can, I am sure, be maintained in no other way than by casting on the dim colours of memory the light of a persistent hope. Sad as is George Eliot's picture of the last days of the great Florentine reformer, there are few things in history or fiction which are to me so stimulating as that account of how, when Savonarola's consciousness of Divine presence and approval and guidance lost its constancy and became painfully intermittent, "*he lived on the faith of yesterday, waiting for the faith of to-morrow.*" Such strenuous persistence is never without its reward. If we, like Savonarola, will only resolve to live on the faith of yesterday, we shall not always be left to wait for the faith of to-morrow; for a new vision will arise with every dawn; each day will bring its own revelation; in doing the will we shall know the doctrine.

But if we are thus to utilise the insight of the past, we must first take care to utilise the insight of the present. Our holy tasks must be "in hours of insight willed." There are, in every man's life, certain supreme moments, in which the soul seems capable of the noblest passion, the mind of the loftiest thought, the body of the most courageous action. This is how God often visits us; and the loss is infinite if either we do not recognise, or neglect when recognised, the day of our visitation. What we want is the instant resolution to seize the highest opportunity by rising to the highest duty; to wrestle with the angel who appears at some new Penpel, and not let him depart with

an unbestowed blessing. If this resolution be absent, the angel will each time approach us with diminished glory, until the day come when he stands by us in sadness and we know it not ; but if we accept the inspiration and claim the blessing, the one will become nobler, the other ineffably grander with each succeeding visitation ; and those angel visits, which were once few and far between, will become more and more constant, until we waken every morning to behold the gleaming of their faces, and every night sink into slumber beneath the shadow of their wings.

There are those who, after doing their best to make Christianity repellent and incredible, turn round upon the heretics they have themselves made, and denounce them as men who believe a thing, not because it is true, but because they wish to believe it. This is regarded as a terrible accusation by both parties ; but it seems to me that such belief is, in some degree, a necessity ; and that, as a matter of fact, no man ever believes any doctrine from which his whole nature revolts, however strong the evidence for it may be. Even more than this might be said. Is not our instinctive desire to believe a certain proposition, in itself as weighty an evidence of its truth, as the craving of our palate for a certain article of diet is of *its* wholesomeness ? Of course, as in the latter case the body, so in the former case the soul, must be assumed to be in a healthy condition ; but we dare not consign our brother to a spiritual lazaret-house, because he finds

food in what we fling from us as refuse. Christianity presents itself to us as the fulfilment of desire ; as the satisfaction of a craving which is, at times, in the heart of every man ; and proclaims, in the most glorious of all its benedictions, " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." If God be with a man, making him one with Himself, he need not be afraid of believing in what he desires.

The man who really prays often feels that he has no thoughts and no words, for all his wants are summed up in one supreme want—a want of God Himself. The world draws us away from God and keeps Him out of our affections ; not because the world has really more attractions for the human heart, but because of the defect in us which hinders us from seeing God as He is,—which blinds our eyes to the King in His beauty, and makes His kingdom a land which is very far off. If we long to be holy, strive to be holy, and are still not holy, our failure is owing to defective vision. *It would be easy always to live God's life if we could always see God's face.* Then, not holiness but sin would become the impossible thing. When God becomes unreal, when He is seen but as a dim shadow on the background of infinity, then indeed does duty become hard to us ; and the hardness is just in proportion to the religiousness of our nature ; that is, to the conscious need of Divine presence and sympathy. It seems, therefore, probable that the

man whose motive power is found in his consciousness of certain relations to God, may, when that consciousness becomes dim, fall into sins from which the man who lives by mere rules of conduct is free; he may, like David and Peter, expose himself to open shame; but so long as the Divine affection within him is not dead, but only for the time overpowered, there is a capacity of immediate recovery from, and of final victory over, sin, which the mere mechanical moralist neither possesses nor understands. In one moment of conscious face-to-face communion with the All Holy, there is found a power which years of virtuous habit cannot give; and it is the recognition of this fact which, in all ages, has driven pious souls into solitude, to seek for some spot where God and they might hold uninterrupted converse. The biographies of such men are both examples and warnings, but the teachers of this age give us the warnings alone. We must not forget that in these consecrated lives there have been results achieved as well as failures suffered; and for ourselves we must learn that we too may sometimes wisely seek the mountain, not only to feed hungry multitudes, but to be fed ourselves with God's word spoken in our ear; that if there is glory in serving the Master, there is strength, and stimulation, and bliss in sitting at His feet and looking up into His face.


Those who, with all the powers of their soul, hold to the great doctrine of the final and complete triumph of

goodness, are taunted with weakly exalting the Divine love at the expense of the Divine justice. It is doubtless upon the assurance of a love which is absolutely infinite that their personal faith really rests ; but if required to put into intellectual form their reason for the hope that is in them, it is quite possible to construct an impregnable argument without putting the *love* of God even as one of its postulates. Leave love out of the question ; say simply, " God is a being of perfect holiness, who therefore desires the holiness of every man ; a being of infinite power, who can therefore accomplish all that He desires," and you have the conclusion irresistibly forced upon you. We are indeed told that God has given to man an absolute freedom of will, a power to turn his back upon heaven and to choose hell ; and moreover, that with this freedom He will never interfere ; but it seems to me that such objectors are either using an argument whose scope they do not appreciate, or they are proclaiming an utterly incredible horror. The first alternative is the more probable. The real relation of the Divine to the human will is not really understood. It is indeed true that God compels no man to leave sin and come to Him, either by forcing him against his will or by making his will powerless ; but He does present Himself to the soul with such fulness of revelation that the will is surprised into sweet consent. The man says, " My God, I come to Thee. Had I known Thee as Thou art, I should have come long ago, but mine eyes were blinded through

the deceitfulness of sin. Thou hast opened them, and I thank Thee for the light in which I see. I thank Thee that in my soul Thy promise is fulfilled, and that I am made willing in the day of Thy power." This is God's method now ; and, because He changes not, neither is weary, it must needs be His method to all eternity. Every motive that can sway a man, God will use ; every affection through which he can be influenced, God will touch ; and at last the prodigal, finding that the feast in the Father's house is indeed better than the husks in the wilderness, turns his face homeward and enters in to go no more out for ever. Dare we say that this sweet Divine persuasion is brought to an end or made powerless by the mere physical change which separates the body from the soul ; that only over the man who is in the flesh can the Spirit of holiness have power ; that the thing which we call death takes the soul into a region where the redemptive activity of the God of the living must be for ever impotent ? Not so : the Spirit of God within us shrinks back, outraged, from a materialism so degrading and so horrible. We will rather accept the sure word of prophecy,—that the uplifted Christ will draw all men unto Him ; that as He preaches now from Calvary to spirits imprisoned in veils of flesh which hide them from them ; so, when those veils are removed, He will preach on to ears empty of earth's voices ; will show His five wounds to eyes undistracted by earth's pageantries ; and that when they, knowing Him whom they have pierced,

are reconciled at last, He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

It was to utterances like these that the members of *Our Ecclesia* listened Sunday after Sunday. Now and then Pelican gave us a chapter from some book dealing with the inner life; and two or three of us became acquainted for the first time with T. C. Upham, Madame Guyon, and mystical writers of an earlier date. Sometimes we had a discourse from Dr. Newman, or from James Martineau's "Endeavours after the Christian Life;" a book which Pelican always recognised as the realization of his ideal of preaching—the perfect combination and harmony of the intellectual and spiritual elements. When George MacDonald's "Unspoken Sermons" were published, we had them, one by one, on twelve successive Sundays; and the infrequency of the glances which the reader cast upon the printed page showed that in very love he had made not only thoughts but words his own. There were some few books which he could hardly be said to *read*; he drank them in, and they fired his veins like potent wine. I first noticed this when he became acquainted with some of Mrs. Browning's Poems,—“Confessions;” “The Rhyme of the Duchess May;” “The Lay of the Brown Rosary;” “Portuguese Sonnets.” Then “Modern Painters,” particularly the fifth volume, cast a similar spell upon him; and he also revelled in the Christianization of Political Economy, which he considered had been accomp-



lished by the great art critic in the much vilified essays which he entitled "Unto this Last." But by no book was he more powerfully and permanently influenced than by this little volume of "Unspoken Sermons," which enabled him—as I believe it has enabled many others—to see his own inarticulate devout yearnings and shapeless spiritual conceptions presented with definite outlines, at once soft and clear, like those of some fair sculptured image, tinged by the rays of the sunset with a life-giving flush of rose. "I have learned," he used to say, "many things from many men and women,—from Emerson, George Eliot, Goethe, James Martineau, F. D. Maurice ; but the very best things I have learned—the things I could least easily part with, because they have entered into my very life—have been taught me by John Ruskin and George MacDonald."

The poetical aids to meditation and devotion which Pelican contributed to *Our Ecclesia*, were neither so numerous nor so varied as his prose addresses. The predominance of the mystical element was more marked, as it was likely to be ; for it is one of those elements in a man's nature which his speech may hide, but which his song must reveal, if it is not to lose all lyrical freedom. I have only room here for one of these poems. Whatever may be its failings, it has the one merit of being curiously characteristic of its author, at least of that side of him which was turned towards two or three friends, and away from the world.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SONG OF LIFE.

"For me to live is Christ."

So wrote the old Apostle ; knowing well
The world's joys he had priced,
And then had chosen fetters and a cell.

The ruler of this world
Offered his gifts ; he would not be enticed ;
But in one sentence hurled
Them all away—"For me to live is Christ."

Once there had been a time
When in the Crucified he saw no grace,—
Moved not by the sublime
Rapt ecstasy on dying Stephen's face.

But on that lonely road
Which led to far Damascus, he was stayed
By One who sadly showed
To him the five wounds which his sin had made.

"Saul, Saul," a sad voice said :
"Who art Thou, Lord ;" the stricken Saul replied ;
Then fell to earth as dead,
Knowing at last the Lord he had defied.

He died in that great hour ;
The world's breath, which had been the life of Saul,
Lost all its ancient power,
And was but death : Christ was his life, his all.

Yes ; and there was a day
When I too thought the world had me sufficed ;
Mine eyes were turned away,
Nor saw the loving, yearning face of Christ.

I thought that I was strong,
Nor needed I to beg for strength Divine ;
So thought I, but ere long
My Lord made weakness of that strength of mine.

He made me weak, to show
My fond heart how it might be strong at length ;
His secret now I know,
For in my weakness He is made my strength.

I thought that I had life ;
My blood flowed warm and quick, my heart beat high ;
Foremost in every strife
For mastery ; who was so proud as I ?

Now indeed am I dead ;
Nay, rather, now alive to die no more ;
My death is captive led ;
Christ's life is mine : 'twas death that reigned before.

Yes ; and a solemn change
Has overspread my world ; for now, whene'er
My wandering footsteps range
To haunts that once were lone, my Lord is there.

Oft in the busy street
I hear a voice—I know He passes by ;
And then, O moment sweet,
To me, even to me, He draweth nigh.

I see Him in my joy ;
I see Him when mine eyes with tears are dim ;
If the world me annoy,
It cannot touch my life, 'tis hid in Him.

O strangest of things strange,
This sweet death, and this sweeter life of mine ;
This death to chance and change,
Life to the chanceless, changeless, the divine.

What words of earthly lays
Can magnify enough the life thus given ;
Which makes all earthly days
Empty of earth, and earth itself a heaven ?

What better words than these
Which for the great apostle once sufficed ;
The mystery of his peace
To celebrate—" For me to live is Christ ! "

Lord Jesus, for this thing
I thank Thee, that I now can speak with Paul ;
Nay, I will rather sing,
Speech is so poor,— " Christ is my life, my all. "

X.

LOVE AND DEATH.

AMONG all Pelican's prose legacies I have as yet discovered only one passage bearing directly upon the great theme of half the literature of the world. That solitary utterance I produce here, for reasons which will be soon apparent.

There is a period in the growth of love between a man and a woman when parting all at once loses its bitterness. I do not mean its sorrow; that is quite a different thing: the word I have used is the only one that can express the meaning I want to convey. Love is the perception of affinity,—but affinity is not union; it is only its necessary condition. Perfect union being the goal which all true love sets before itself, it welcomes all meeting times as means to making the union complete; and if, when the hour of parting comes, there is something remaining to be done, the eagerness with which another meeting is looked forward to has in it a painful element of impatience and unrest. There is a feeling that the hours have been lost; that something has been missed which might have been attained; and therefore there is added to the sorrow of parting a bitterness, not identical with, but akin to, the bitterness

of remorse. But when love is complete, when the union of two natures is perfected, every hour of meeting is a time not of half-painful aspiration, but of blissful satisfaction. The ideal future of love's early days is no longer ideal or future, but real and now. The lover who is thus made happy feels that he has reached the eternal serenity of the table-land upon the mountain-top, where he can wander about for ever in the pure air; whereas, but a few months ago, when he and his beloved were climbing the rugged path together, he found that the height attained in one hour of sweet converse was lost in the week of separation, and the summit, which seemed so near at the hour of parting, was dim in the distance when the meeting time again came round. When the union of two souls has become so complete that absence has no power to diminish its perfectness, then and then only, separation loses not its sorrow but its sting.


I find these sentences scrawled in pencil on one of the fragments of paper in the black box. How better than with them can I begin this chapter which must tell the story of how Love and Death, the great uniter and the great divider, came to Paul Pelican? How better, I say; for I think they show that he had entered into the secret of love; and the man who has once done this is the man who beyond all others is prepared to know that other secret—the great secret of death. The crowd may reject as an ignorant blasphemy the seemingly wild

notion that the man who loves a woman is therefore fitted for that world in which they neither marry nor are given in marriage ; but they—unhappily not a crowd—who have entered into the holy place of human love, into its inner sanctuary, know that with that entrance there has for the first time dawned upon them the vision of the Divine love which is beyond vision,—the love which heart cannot conceive but only faintly feel.

It was about the time of the inauguration of his ecclesiastical experiment that Pelican received a letter from one of his friends at Avondale, appealing to him on behalf of a widow lady who, with her daughter, was coming to settle at Brookfield with the hope of supplementing an insignificant annuity by establishing a school for young children. Mrs. Forrest, the letter said, had been the wife of a man of fine powers of mind and heart, devoid only of the mysterious something which brings success. After failing in business, and failing in literature, he had at last hit upon a mechanical invention of some value which he anticipated would prove an *open sesame* to the treasure-house of fortune. Then came the old, sad story. Having neither wealth, nor influence, one of which must be found before general recognition of his work could be obtained, he put himself and his new treasure into the hands of a man who had both ; and then, after a few months, awakened from a sweet dream of hope to find himself betrayed. He was no longer a young man—he had fought his long fight with fortune ;

not perhaps with very effective weapons, though always with hopeful courage and stainless honour, and after many defeats had armed himself cheerily for another battle. But now he felt that his last field had been fought; despair in its quietest, least visible, but most hopeless, form had come to him; and, with a broken heart, he lay down and died. His widow, who as a little child had played in the fields near Brookfield, felt drawn towards her early home, and so came with her daughter to find—she knew not what. Being a woman of some little culture, the school plan was soon thought of, but there were difficulties in carrying it out. She knew no one; her old friends were dispersed or dead; and the letter which came to Pelican was to beg him to call at the little house—half-villa, half-cottage,—and to exert in her aid such influence as he possessed.

The call was made, and Pelican came to my rooms one evening and talked for an hour on the subject of Mrs. Forrest and her daughter. He had in conversation a happy knack of personal description; and he made me see in my mind's eye, almost as clearly as I afterwards saw with eyes of flesh, the whole scene as it had presented itself to him. A small room quaintly furnished; a little timid-looking woman, whose face in repose had a tired look, which gave place in any earnest conversation to a curious expression of mental and emotional excitement, as if the light of some inward fire were flashing through cracks in the outer crust of calm; a girl in the




first flush of early womanhood, sitting on a low chair opposite to her mother, with a slight youthful figure and a pleasant attractive face, noticeable chiefly for the open, inquiring, almost solemn eyes, and the sweet seductive mouth, always haunted by the suggestion of a smile.

I believe I was the first to find out what had happened ; to see that Pelican's fate, so far as love was concerned, had come to him once for all in the person of Lucy Forrest. I saw almost as much of him as ever, but when he was not with me I always knew that the supreme gravitation, of a dawning passion had drawn him to Heath Cottage. I was silent, but other people soon saw what had been visible to me. It was first vaguely rumoured, then openly said, then definitely known, that Paul Pelican had asked Lucy Forrest to be his wife, and that she had said, "Yes." I knew that in their hearts the question had been asked, and answered long before, as are such questions always ; the inarticulate coming before the articulate ; the meeting of the lips simply bringing into the world of sense a primal meeting of spirits in the world of emotion.

I think I know how I found it out first. It was by watching her face when Pelican talked. I have often been struck by the fact that one of the best ways by which to gauge the quality of other people's feelings towards us is to notice the manner in which they listen to us. This test is, I believe, certain to yield correct results in the hands of any competent person ; but its

application unfortunately demands both observation and discrimination which, like some other intellectual habits, are as yet far from being universal. Most of us are too full of what we are saying to be able to bestow much attention on the person to whom we are saying it ; and when we do notice the reception which our monologue obtains, we are too apt to mistake for a real interest in ourselves the interest which is only felt in our subject, or perhaps, merely the polite endurance which is intended to hide the want of any interest at all. In fact, it is true of talking and of listening, of sliding into love and falling out of it, as it is of a hundred other things, that the looker-on sees most of the game : and there is a certain rapt, fascinated gaze, giving one the impression that the listener is gradually drawing nearer and nearer to the speaker, which the bystander, if he have eyes in his head, can never misinterpret.

There is some nonsense, and a great deal that is not nonsense, in the talk we hear about people being made for each other. A man may marry a woman who was by no means made for him, and remain in blissful unconsciousness of the fact, as happy as if he and his wife had been turned out of corresponding spiritual moulds. If Lucy Forrest had not met Paul Pelican, she would have loved, and perhaps married, some one else ; she would have made him happy and have been happy herself, free from the haunting consciousness of any other possibilities that might have been hers. But not less am I sure that



when she did meet him, she met the one man in the world who was, as the popular voice would say, "made for her;" the man whose nature was to her a solution of the mysteries of her own, because it was just the nature which, placed side by side with her own, made its incompleteness complete. Pelican once accused me of always being ready to have a fling at the sentimentalists. Here is an opportunity for the anti-sentimentalists to have a fling at me. Let them say their worst. I stand by what I have written, and am, moreover, ready to confess that, seeing we must all be wrong sometimes, I should prefer to be wrong with the sentimentalists rather than with the cynics.

During the first few happy months of Pelican's new passion, his old love for literature did not cool. He was always at work either upon an article for a local satirist, which hit all round with praiseworthy impartiality, or an address for Our Ecclesia, or some verses inspired by his love for Lucy Forrest. Of these love-poems I reproduce two. The first of these was written during a temporary absence from Brookfield, and is another example of Pelican's sonnet writing, an exercise which had for him the charm which it has for so many young poets. Upon the extent of his success in a form of composition, the difficulties of which are, I suppose, only known to people who practise it, I have no right to offer an opinion. The verses entitled "Love's Questionings," are without a

date, and I have no means of determining the circumstances in which they were written.

LOVE AND ABSENCE.

Let it not grieve thee, dear, to hear me say
 'Tis false that absence maketh the fond heart
More fond ; that when alone and far apart
From thee, I love thee more from day to day.
Not so ; for then my heart would ever pray
 For longer separation, that I might
In absence from thee gain the utmost height
Of love unrealized ; nor would I stay
In my swift course, but onward I would press,
 Until I touched with eager hand the goal
Of possible passion. Did I love thee less,
 Then might I love thee more ; but now my soul
Is filled throughout with perfect tenderness :
 No part of me thou hast, but the full whole.

There is much emotional truth in this sonnet ; but when Pelican wrote it, he had yet to learn one of those lessons which was soon learned by him, as it is by every one who knows the meaning of a pure passion :—that love's perfectness is not attained when the heart is for the first time full of it ; because it is love's essential function to make room for its own growth, and the fulness of yesterday seems but emptiness, when compared with the fulness of to-day.

The next poem needs no comment. If the reader thinks it is a little too elaborate and artificial, I must plead guilty to an occasional agreement with his view of it.

LOVE'S QUESTIONINGS.

Oh what is lovelier than my lady's face,
The speaking silence of her soft grey eyes,
The lines of the fair features where I trace
The outlines of a soul divinely wise,
Yet all alive with human sympathies ?

What more enchanting than my lady's smile ?
Welcomer when it flutters on her lips,
So still before, than is the ocean isle
To weary mariners in storm-beat ships,
Or the new sunlight after an eclipse.

What is more thrilling than my lady's touch ?
My heart leaps at the pressure of her hand,
With wild tumultuous ecstasy ; yet such
Is its sweet sorcery—hard to understand—
Again it calms me like a fairy's wand.

Oh what more rapturous than my lady's kiss ?
It burns upon my lips like living flame,
And leaves me silent with excess of bliss,
To which my stammering verse can give no name,
For love has mysteries which put words to shame.

What need for further question ? They who know
Love's secret can the answer well divine :
These things are full of all delights ; but oh !
Much fuller that of which they are a sign,—
The love that lives in them and makes them mine.

The months passed on, and Lucy Forrest and Paul Pelican were still graceful and gracious actors in the little happy comedy which was played before the onlooking eyes of Brookfield. But it is the misfortune of the dramas of real life that they want unity ; and

the play which is a comedy at the beginning, is a tragedy at the end. Across our little comedy the tragic shadows soon began to shoot, and at last came a day in which the tragedy had the whole field to itself.

People began to notice that the gleams of strange light, which sometimes shone out from Mrs. Forrest's eyes became more and more frequent; the tired look which before seemed to be giving place to an expression of excited anguish; new questions began to be asked concerning her; new whispers arose here and there; the children whom she brought home with stories of inexplicable things she had said and done, and anxious parents began to find all kinds of reasons for quietly taking them away, and keeping them at home, or sending them elsewhere for their physical and mental culture. Destitution, which had been hitherto kept outside the door of Heath Cottage, began to invade the little dwelling. This was not the worst, but the worst was not long in coming. The twilight was just melting into darkness, on a still evening in the later spring, when Lucy and Paul, returning from one of their now infrequent lovers' strolls, found the house empty, and the emptiness struck them both dumb with a vague fear. Lucy had been away only an hour, and she had left her mother more quiet and cheerful than usual, but in an instant she was overcome by a new terror. Hurried inquiries were made, and one neighbour testified that she had

seen Mrs. Forrest walking quickly along the road towards the open country. She was sure she had not been mistaken, though it was growing dark ; for her attention had been drawn, and her wonder excited, by the strangeness of choosing to walk, at such an hour, along a road which led only to a lonely hamlet, and ran for some distance along the bank of a more lonely lake. When Lucy knew where that last sight of her had been obtained, she knew all ; the next hour or the next day could tell her nothing more. The road passed the lake ; she knew her mother had *not* passed it ; that its waters had cooled the fever of her brain for ever, and given her rest at last.

It was even so. The dawn brought to an end the mystery of the night ; for the dead body of Lucy Forrest's mother was drawn from the dark depths of Stannington Mere. And then every one knew the story of which this was the awful catastrophe ; how ever since her husband's death, Mrs. Forrest had been day by day losing her old patient tranquillity, and becoming restless, excited, strange ; how gradually the terrible idea that she had got beyond the reach of the Infinite Pity had gained upon her, and tinged all her emotions with one lurid colour ; how her daughter had often sat up all night helplessly listening to her awful lament that she was forsaken ; how appeals for help to those from whom help was due, had all been disregarded until the very day of

the fearful ending, when a relative in a distant county had written to say that he was coming to see what could be done; and how, in that last happy hour, when she and Paul had walked home in the twilight, she had told him that she had at last a quiet mind, for her mother seemed better, and that, at any rate, aid was near.

Mr. George Forrest, Lucy's great-uncle, came duly,—only a day too late. He was a kind man, and the day—the many days—had been lost more by want of thought, than want of heart. But still they *were* lost; and, so far as the past went, he might as well have been unkind. In the present, however, kindness could do some little, and that little was done. Mrs. Forrest was buried in a quiet corner of St. Cuthbert's churchyard; one or two who had learned first to pity and then to love the woman for whom life had been too hard a task, planted flowers upon her grave; and it was soon arranged that with Mr. George Forrest, Lucy was for the present to find a home.

After she had gone, I saw more of Pelican than I had seen of him for some months; had more unreserved talk with him, and began to understand more clearly than ever the real nature of the mutual attraction which he and Lucy exercised, each towards each. The theory which seems to be *implied* (certainly nothing so utterly prosaic as a theory is *expressed*) in the following

little poem, written during his brightest days,—the theory that mutual love is the inevitable result of the meeting of certain personalities, rather than of the recognition of certain qualities, is in the main true enough, and was as true in his case as in others; but it did not supply *all* the truth, for those who knew Paul and Lucy best, saw most clearly the visible characteristics which drew them to each other. Nevertheless, the poem is perhaps worth quoting here as an attempted solution of that most puzzling of social riddles, “What attracted such a man to such a woman?” or, “How could such a woman bestow her affections on such a man?”

SHE AND I.

Why do I love my love so well?
Why is she all in all to me?
I try to tell, I cannot tell,
It still remains a mystery.
And why to her I am so dear
I cannot tell although I try,
Unless I find both answers here :—
She is herself, and I am I.

Her face is very sweet to me,
Her eyes beam tenderly on mine;
But can I say I never see
Face fairer, eyes that brighter shine;
This thing I surely cannot say,
If I speak truth and do not lie;
Yet here I am in love to-day,
For she's herself, and I am I.

It cannot be that I fulfil
Completely all her girlish dreams ;
For far beyond my real still
Her old ideal surely gleams.
And yet I know her love is mine,
A flowing spring that cannot dry :
What explanation? This, in fine,—
She is herself, and I am I.

'Mid all the cords by which two hearts
Are drawn together into one,
This is a cord that never parts,
But strengthens as the years roll on ;
And though, as seasons hurry past,
Strength, beauty, wit, and genius die,
Till death strike us this charm will last—
She is herself, and I am I.


She is herself and I am I :
Now, henceforth, ever more the same,
Till the dark angel draweth nigh,
And calleth her and me by name :
Yea, after death has done his worst,
Each risen soul will straightway fly
To meet the other : as at first
She'll be herself, I shall be I.

As I have already said, this love affair was one which found its complete *rationale* in the facts that Lucy was Lucy, that Paul was Paul, and that Lucy and Paul had met ; but there were also certain obvious fitnesses which rendered the questions in the first verse of the poem perfectly unnecessary to those who had open eyes. Love brings an infinity of gifts to every man who is capable

of receiving it, and it did not come empty-handed to Paul Pelican. Lucy Forrest brought to him both stimulation and rest,—the two things which in different ways he needed most. She stimulated him by keeping his own ideals constantly before him; never with greater persistence than in the hours of despair when, after some failure in achievement, he felt most inclined to let them go. People said that Lucy Forrest flattered Paul Pelican, but it was not with the coarse flattery which degrades the recipient,—the only flattery which the gossiping crowd can ever comprehend. It was that subtle and altogether honourable flattery which feels rather like blame than praise; because, while it throws its lime-light on the glories of the possible self, it also reveals the width of the gulf which lies between that fair ideal and the poor reality of the present hour. Once having shown him the vision of his best self, Lucy could trust him not to turn his foot away from the path to the unattained but never unattainable heights where the possible Paul awaited him with a welcoming smile. And her trust was not in vain; for day by day those who knew him well could see the new persistent constancy of aspiration taking the place of the old spasmodic flight and quickly wearied wing.

But Lucy, as I have said already, brought to Paul Pelican not only stimulation but rest. In the early days of our acquaintance a certain intellectual restlessness was one of his most striking characteristics. Paradoxical as the phrase may sound, I can only describe his mental

condition at that time as a state of morbid equilibrium. When we speak of a well-balanced mind we always suppose we are uttering a panegyric; but surely it is a misfortune when a mind is, as it were, so nicely hung that it oscillates with every movement of intellectual air. It is not well for a man's peace to have no prejudices, to be born without a bias; and happily no man is really thus born, though there are those in whom the internal bias is too weak to present any obstacle to the march of external adverse forces. The chamber in which Pelican dwelt was haunted by phantom doubts which he could not drive away until Lucy Forrest came to him and helped him to exorcise the tormenting demons. The moment in which he had arrived at some conclusion towards which he had long been journeying was always the moment in which the arguments against that conclusion presented themselves with sternest presence and most audible appeal; and, just in proportion to the peace and rest which the new truth gave him, were the terror and misery of the haunting uncertainty. His love for Lucy Forrest was helpful and medicinal, because it brought him into vital relations with a mind, not so subtle nor perhaps so transparent as his own, but having a certain simplicity and unity which his mental breadth tended to exclude. Lucy's convictions were realizations; she not only believed but saw; and what Wordsworth's sister did for him she did for Pelican—"she gave him eyes." Mr. R. H. Hutton in one of his



masterly essays says that "no man is ever really convinced by the mere spectacle of strong faith in others," and this is probably true ; but there are, I am sure, many cases in which a probable inference is, through some mysterious action of spiritual chemistry, changed into an indefectible certitude by the mere revelation of such certitude existing in another mind. The spectacle of strong faith in others does not indeed provide us with new proofs ; but it vitalizes the old ones, and enables them to lay hold of us with a living grasp. Nothing is changed, and yet all is changed. The truths are there ; the doubts are there too ;—but the truths are now living, the doubts are for ever dead.

But I must not linger over the story which will now be so quickly told. I remember—how can I forget—the morning when, as I was going out to my daily work, I met Paul Pelican ; saw in his face that something was wrong, and was struck by a sudden chill of apprehension. Lucy Forrest was dangerously ill, and he had been sent for. She had always given me an impression of fragility, and I knew that the horror of that night had never left her ; but for a time the change had seemed to do her good, and Paul had always spoken of her hopefully and cheerily. But she had caught cold ; fever had set in ; the doctor had expressed doubts as to whether she had sufficient stamina to repel the invader ; and had suggested that her friends should be summoned. Outside her new home she had only one, and he was

hurrying to her side. He had his small portmanteau in his hand, and I walked beside him to the railway station. He was silent for a few minutes, and then he began to talk quickly. "I don't know why it is," said he, "but I have no hope. I seem to know that she is going to die. She has made heaven very real to me, and now she is going to make it more real still. I shall bless God for her as long as I live, but it will be a terrible waiting. I remember the last evening she was here, I was reading aloud Mrs. Browning's *Rhyme of the Duchess May*. You know that verse addressed to the dead people in the churchyard :—

“‘ In your patience ye are strong : cold and heat ye take not wrong :
When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.’

She told me that she would like me to die first, for she thought she could wait better than I. She said that heaven would be so strangely sweet, that before I had time to feel that I was alone, the trumpet would sound and we should be together for ever ; but that if I were left down here, she knew that time would seem very weary and very long. She said it would seem long to her, but not so very weary ; for since her mother had died God had helped her to feel that heaven was very close, divided from her only by a curtain from behind which lights gleamed and music came ; which was sometimes lifted up for an instant, that she might see her mother sitting, with a new calm upon her face, at the

feet of the Master." He said much more ; but, though the impression of the whole talk remains with me, the thoughts and words are gone. Sometimes we listen too intently for remembrance. At last we reached the station ; in two or three minutes the train glided in ; another moment and it had glided away. I heard a few words of farewell, a "good-bye," a "God bless you ;" I saw a sweet, strange smile which will remain with me for ever ; and for me that was the last of Paul Pelican, till the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel, when I shall meet Lucy, her mother, and him, once more.

The next morning every newspaper in England contained an account of the most terrible railway accident which had happened in our part of the country for many years ; and in a later edition there appeared among the names of the dead the name of him I have known and loved so well. Those who saw the body which had been his habitation said that there was still a half smile upon the parted lips, and it gladdened me to think that the look which I had last seen was the one he carried with him into eternity, the look with which he greeted Lucy in the first moment of their everlasting union. For they met quickly. An hour before the sudden crash which lifted up for him the dark curtain, her spirit had hastened away to greet him with a kiss of welcome ; and while I was fearing, and wondering, and hoping, and doubting, Lucy and Paul were at peace for ever, gazing on each other's face, and then turning to gaze on that

Face in which they saw the Divine substance of a love whose shadow and reflection had transfigured their earthly lives.

After I had heard the tidings I walked home through the fields and the wood, both full of the glory of the spring. It was an hour in which earth seemed most heavenly, and yet heaven seemed most dear. The whole world was flooded with light and colour, and the universal air was vocal with a cry of resurrection. There was a music that was audible even to the dull ear of sense, the flutter of a thousand wings, the harmony of a thousand blended notes ; for the time of the singing of birds had come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land.

Oh ! the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I said in underbreath,—‘ All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best ? ’

Oh ! the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I smiled to think God’s greatness flowed around our incom-
pleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.”

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